Economic and Social Change *in Post-Soviet Rural* Uzbekistan

Thesis

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Contents

Foreword

This thesis is an account of rural life in post-socialist Uzbekistan in two settings, namely the oasis of Bukhara and the Ferghana Valley. It is about a post-socialist context where continuity and change exist at the same time and in sometimes puzzling forms. What has changed is missed strongly, while that what has taken over is challenged by many. Both sides, continuity and change, determine the lives that people have to face and deal with as a result of independence. In the centre of this are the former collective enterprises, the kolkhozes and sovkhozes of the socialist period, and their modern successors, the *shirkat*. They embody the economic continuity and change in the country. While the socialist collectives were dissolved as secure employment units, in a way they continue to exist under new Uzbek labels and still attached to a plan economy. This facet is the starting point of this study. The question is what has changed, to what extent and how rural residents deal with these changes in their everyday lives.

The radical changes in agrarian structures have brought a handful of new actors to the field, in one site semi-private *fermer* (land leaser) and in the other the heads of the new *shirkat* enterprises. Both have often been part of the elite already in the past. The changes have also created numerous dependents to the *fermer* and *shirkat* in form of the formal kolkhoz workers who became a reservoir of unpaid labor force. In some way, the rural population of Uzbekistan can thus be differentiated in those who have access to lease agrarian land and those who have not (or only very precarious). These different groups of actors shape the agrarian landscape and make the focus of this study.

Besides the more narrowly economic aspects of the restructuring of rural economy and of how people try to secure their livelihoods, there are other dimensions closely related to this. The main part of the thesis is structured along these dimensions, which have been labelled as economic, social, political and ideological strategies. Obviously, this is simplifying reality and none

of these are easy to demarcate. But they serve their purpose as analytical categories. Social relations and their transformation are of key importance in this regard. As a sedentary population, Uzbeks have a strong local identity, which units them with other local groups while creating rivalry towards other places within the country. This rivalry can be in any aspect, from success in cotton plan fulfilment to being a proper Muslim or being more civilized. In daily life, when talking with an anthropologist, these differentiating aspects are very often mentioned. They thus also build an important part of the data and a secondary focus of the study, ranging from kinship and (inter-)ethnic relations to the local community and the meaning of religion. Actors' economic strategies and interests are not decoupled from their community life and interaction with others. Trust between actors but also trust towards the state and its institutions, social networks and solidarity groups are important factors that shape the decision-making processes and determine the possibilities of actors. In that respect, related with the location of the two field sites, not only the process of rural restructuring are different but also how actors deal with problems and with which kind of solutions they respond.

This work has its limits. These limits are to a large extend related with the focus of the study. Rural economy is not an easy-going subject in Uzbekistan since many things are organized either illegally, behind closed doors or people do not feel free to talk about it because of strong state surveillance. The reason behind choosing two field sites has also been related with the peculiarities of doing fieldwork in Uzbekistan. Having all necessary documents and permissions does not mean that one can stay until the necessary data is collected or all questions are answered. Two field sites were chosen in order to relieve the host families and the others as interlocutors. In this thesis, I also do not organize my data along two separate sections according to two settings. The anonymity of interlocutors was one of the reasons but also the variability of the data; therefore it is organized along subjects, namely the variety of strategies that actors employ. It was also necessary to have thematic variation during fieldwork to ease my interaction with the people. The consequence is a rather broad and ethnographic approach covering different aspects from everyday life. Retrospectively, I believe that these aspects complement the works that others have done in Central Asia but also reveals and challenges their findings.

Two institutions and many people provided support during the lengthy and often interrupted period of writing this dissertation. The Max Planck Institute

for Social Anthropology Halle/Saale enabled me to realize the fieldwork and provided me with many other (material as well as non-material) resources. Fieldwork and data analysis would not have been possible without this support. One of my supervisors, Günther Schlee, is part of this support and he waited and waited with patience and generosity at every stage of this work. The work started in Halle and travelled with my husband and me to other places to end up in Zürich. Mareile Flitsch to whom I am equally grateful not only for her support and criticism but also encouraging me to think about things in a way I had not done before. I consider myself more than fortune to have both these supervisors without whom this work would not have start and without whom it would not have been finished. I am deeply indebted to both of them.

There are many more people to whom I am thankful. Unfortunately, I feel unable to name those people in person that would deserve it most, my hosts, friends and acquaintances in the two field sites. While using pseudonyms is a common practise in anthropology, there are few places where they are as necessary than in a place like Uzbekistan. They provided me with everything and accepted me as a member of their family. Their generosity and eloquence, trust and patience made it possible for me to put those stories on paper.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Searching for the Field Site

As may also be true in regards to other field sides, the beginning of my research period of anthropological fieldwork in Uzbekistan proved to be quite challenging and disappointing. In the beginning I tended to be rather insecure as to whether I would be able to study the "sensitive" subject I had chosen. After all, many publications on Central Asia touched this subject and described the region, and specifically the Ferghana Valley, as having "high conflict potential."[1] After organizing the necessary documents and spending a few weeks in Tashkent, it was time to travel to the countryside and find a "suitable" village for my research project. Actually, only two criteria were important to me: finding a "multiethnic" site and gaining the acceptance of the local officials. For this purpose, I decided to travel and see the countryside with the goal of finding a field site where I could spend an entire year.

First access was relatively easy. I was always welcome in every place, whether it was a potential field site or not. Uzbeks love to have guests and are unsurpassed hosts. My decision to stay or look further in any village merely depended on the aforementioned criteria. When I carefully described my research project, either to the local officials or to people in the village, they seemed to be quite impressed and tried to make their villages as attractive as possible for me. Depending on the region and its respective ethnic combination, most of the time the following comment tended to be made: "Ooohhh we have lots of *millet*. There are more than one hundred in Uzbekistan. We have

[1] For a recent review see Canfield (2011) and Khazanov (2011).

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen, Kazak, Tatar, Russians, and Germans; but by the way they left for Germany. We also had other nationalities but some of them also left after independence, yet some of them are still here. We all live in peace." Sometimes during the conversations, however, it would turn out that there actually was one Tatar wife or an old Russian widow in the village who had married her husband during his military service in Russia, or a grandchild who is one fourth Kazak.

Both the local officials and villagers were proud of their "multi-ethnic" population and it was good bait for an anthropologist. After a while of visiting some possible field sites, I decided to stay in a village in the province (*viloyat*) of Bukhara. The province officials sent me to the district officials and subsequently to the village administration unit, which felt responsible for my well-being during my stay in the village. Hospitability is to be found in the whole of Uzbekistan, yet spending an entire year together requires more than that. The village administration was, however, not only responsible for my well-being but also had to answer to the district and province administrations regarding my work. Readiness to host me not only meant having a guest from Germany but also brought the possibility of unwanted consequences in the case of my stay causing unexpected problems with the authorities. Fortunately, nothing happened in that sense, yet the reason I had to choose a further field site was directly related thereto. Going to the Ferghana Valley and staying there for a while was not only interesting for my research but also provided me, my host family and the village administration with a break. My stay in the village could be sabotaged from above using any arbitrary reason and anytime the village administration might start to perceive me as a problem for their anyhow unappreciated work.

After explaining my intention and providing my references from the district and province officials to the village administration, there emerged a serious problem: finding a place to stay. In rural Uzbekistan, it is almost impossible to find a house to rent or to stay in alone – quite luckily as a matter of fact, as this had not been my intention anyway. The officials, employees and other people were intensely discussing the issue and trying to find a solution. Who and where might be a good, suitable host to me; who could tell me about the village history, tradition and the way of life; who might have enough space? While the local authorities in Bukhara were trying to find a solution, Alisher, who dropped in for some paper work, agreed to take me home. It

was immediately accepted by the village administration. His father was a *hajji* and a former school director, so they could answer all of my questions. Furthermore, they had enough space to accommodate me. He was quickly introduced to my "scientific work" as an ethnographer and to my research topic:

> "She is interested in our tradition, how we Uzbeks, Tajiks and other *millet* live with each other. Take her to weddings, to our circumcisions and to other ceremonies; she wants to learn the language, actually she speaks and understands it already. If there is any problem, any shortcomings - tell us. She has all the necessary documents and the *xokimiyat*[2] knows about her."

Alisher, the younger son of my host family took me to his house in which he lives in one courtyard together with his own family of four and his parents. Within the same courtyard is located the house of his elder brother's family. For the village administration, this was the best solution for many reasons. Not only was the family educated and the father was the first *hajji* in the village, both of his sons were also already teaching at the local school. Thus, besides their intellectual background and available space, they were also respected and had connections to local government officials, which was not an unimportant factor.

My acquaintance with my second host family in the Ferghana Valley goes back to a nawruz feast, when I was visiting the region in the beginning.[3] As already mentioned, I did not intend for a second field side in the beginning and this encounter in the Ferghana Valley dated back to that event. A visit to the district (*tuman*) centre of Marxamat, the day before the feast, provided me with the opportunity to be invited to the coming celebrations in the *xokimiyat*. Almost every institution (schools, hospitals, government offices) is engaged in this time-consuming and costly event, which includes the preparing of *sumelek*[4], eating, drinking with colleagues and having visitors from other institutions. In an exclusive circle in the *xokimiyat*[5], I had the chance to meet

[2] The administrative body, in this case of the district (cf. chapter 2).

[3] This literally means "new day" in Persian and other Iranian languages. It indicates the New Year and the beginning of spring, and is celebrated all over the Iranian world and beyond. Since independence, the 21st of March is an official holiday in Uzbekistan.

[4] *Sumelek* is a special semi-sweet dish, prepared with germinated grain and with other six ingredients especially for nawruz.

[5] I think that as foreigners, my husband and I were privileged and allowed to sit with high-ranking *tuman* officials. They were either chiefs of the police force, banks or the kolkhoz.

my prospective host, a doctor, who invited me to his house whenever I was in the region and needed a place to stay. At that time it was not beyond a usual invitation. When I was accompanied by my husband, having us as guests was even more interesting. In both field sites I was immediately perceived as "one of us" and my non-Turkish husband was automatically "our son-in-law" (bizining domat), because he was married to "one of them". I was considered as "one of us" partly because of my language, partly due to my religion, yet "*bizning domat*" was considered as "ours" simply due to marriage. His religion or whether he converted to Islam was never a subject in either field site.

When I returned to the Ferghana Valley the next time, I took the chance to stay with the doctor and his family. Similar to what happened in Bukhara, my host was not arranged for or searched out by me. I count myself lucky that the question of where I was to stay was spontaneously solved in both field sites. Bahodir worked very hard and came home late and exhausted most of the time. His tiredness and workload was not so much because of the number of patients but rather due to the meetings, which were held in the *tuman* centre with the governor, the *xokim*, and other officials. It was no different in Bukhara with another close acquaintance of mine who was working in the *tuman* administration and was spending days and nights at regular and irregular meetings. Although the doctor had four children, his household was smaller. Their two unmarried sons were studying in two other cities of the *viloyat* and only came home on weekends. The two daughters were married and only one of them was in the village, while the other one lived in Tashkent. Daily life was calmer than in Bukhara. Most of the time the doctor organized things, directed people and defined their jobs; tasks that should have been done by his brothers and others. He was a problem solver mainly due to his connections to the *tuman* administration; a person constantly needed by everybody, from the *tuman* governor to the ordinary kolkhoz worker. His graduation years in Moscow made him a well-known person in his discipline, a fact often mentioned by people. I think my two hosts with their completely different jobs secured and created a certain type of relation which allowed them access to different resources that were quite valuable at that time in Uzbekistan and proved to be extremely helpful for my own research.

We were considered as "guests of the *tuman*".

1.2 Objective of the Study

This work is about everyday life in rural Uzbekistan under changing and unchanging circumstances following the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Since independence, Uzbekistan has created its own ideology of nationhood and economic development. Local actors experience, live and play a part in this process as far as they possibly can and attempt to make the best out of it. In my field sites, my aim was to observe the direct responses of individuals to this new situation at the local level and to understand that interaction. Everyday life comprises different life spheres with different challenges and solutions. Some people have the necessary means to deal with their problems and reach satisfactory solutions, while others do not. Some problems occur every now and then, such as the financing of a wedding ceremony, while some are constantly lingering, like the struggle to make ends meet.

My goal in this dissertation is thus to study how individuals and families in two rural communities live their lives. I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of each and every sphere of those lives, which would not be possible. It suffices to say that, given the conditions following the demise of the Soviet Union, any subject can be a concern for research among scholars. Nevertheless, we hardly find an abundance of ethnographic studies on Central Asia. Perhaps, not enough time has passed. Since 1991, a variety of topics have made the headlines in Central Asian studies, regardless of whether they have been researched or not. It started with ethnicity and conflict, followed by Islam and for a few years now has focused on emigration.

As indicated above, the original focus of my research has been on inter- and intra-ethnic relations in Uzbekistan and my field sites were chosen for that purpose. The standard answers of the people I met stressed the peaceful co-existence of different ethnic groups again and again. This was not just lip service for foreigner guests in order to make a good impression. According to all accounts, it was simply true in both regions. My switch of the topic, however, should not be understood as if there was nothing to research regarding ethnic issues. Of course, ethnicity matters to people. Of course, relations with others are also defined along ethnic lines, closeness and relatedness. The reasons or explanations have their origins in many different factors.[6]

Independence in 1991 brought new challenges to the former republics of

[6] For a detailed study on Uzbek ethnicity and identity see Finke (2006).

the Soviet Union. The early years were seen as a transition phase from socialist plan economy to market economy and the introduction of democratic institutions in the political realm. For this purpose reforms were necessary and inevitable. The creation of new state institutions was part of this process. While the political legitimacy of the new independent states was overwhelmingly kept in the hands of the old power holders, economic reforms also differed in their degree. Since then, the Soviet legacy has continued to exist in many respects; not only in the form of the survival of already-existing institutions; the new ones as well started their work in the spirit of the past. This new system, especially in Uzbekistan, became what could be called a "legacy system" - in the beginning it was understood as a temporary and transitional system with limited reforms, yet in time established itself as stable and permanent. Transition became permanent. A system that had the structures and institutions of the past, yet adjusted itself to the demands of the world market through some amendments. Within this frame, a new and independent Uzbek state attempted to create domestic economic and political institutions, constructed to benefit every level of society. And the actors within attempted to participate and improve their position in those institutions. The reforms and institutions introduced as part of a new world order and the symbols of independence smacked of arbitrariness for many, while for others it cemented their position and advantages of the past.

In both settings, however, independence was not accompanied by the anticipated economic liberalization and democracy. It did not lead to a retreat of the state and its control; on the contrary, this control was inherited and renamed. Many things have basically stayed the same; plan economy, intensive cotton cultivation, kolkhoz-similar production units and, perhaps the most important aspect, state-owned agricultural land. Other aspects of life may look different at first glance, yet even these are usually not free from the restrictions and control of the state as in the case of religion or freedom of speech. On the one hand, after independence people are to take their faith into their own hands and should not expect much from the state since the old regime does not exist anymore. On the other hand, people are not able to get through life without paid salaries, pensions or employment.

After some time, it became evident that most everyday conversations, the division of labour, social contacts and tensions among family members all revolved around economic activities and the planning of the family budget. At

that time, Bukhara *viloyat* was experimenting some first few steps in "privatization", which dominated daily life– much more so than identity or marriage partners for example, the latter of which were chosen along ethnic and local lines. These were predictable, well-known decisions based on pre-existing experiences, which were not challenged after independence. The challenge was managing and planning marriage costs under the new circumstances. This forced me to make a decision: either to stay and work on what was going on in the village without focusing too much on ethnicity or to leave and look for a further setting. The decision was not difficult, not least due to the reason that I could not be sure whether the officials would accept my stay elsewhere. I thus stayed in the village with the exception of my later visits to the Ferghana Valley and some shorter trips to Karakalpakistan and Kashkadarya *viloyat*.

Two provinces meant two places where locality was "formed and lived" by different groups of people. Bukhara is similar to Andijon in that since 1991 it has been located along an international border. Other than that, these two provinces contrast in many aspects, including geography, demography and economy. People have different experiences and a different relation to state power as well as to their inclusion or exclusion. The two field sites with their own spatial, economic, political, social and historical configurations formed different types of Uzbeks with different attitudes to daily life and to the state. This should not mean that in the *vodi*, the valley, as the Ferghana Valley is commonly called throughout the country, and in Bukhara we have two different but within itself homogeneous people since they have each shared the same historical, economic and political processes in one place. What was quite similar in both field sites was how cautious people were when giving accounts and showing their expressions in the beginning – quite understandable in view of contemporary Uzbek politics. What was different yet also unique in this field site was that people in Marxamat did not really find it necessary to hide the fact that things were better in Kyrgyzstan, especially in regards to privatization and religious and political freedom. In Bukhara I got the feeling I was the person connecting them to the world outside; I was the person bringing news from Tashkent and of how things were elsewhere. My Bukharian informants acted as if they were locked in there and could not get out again. In Marxamat, people were just tired of border crossings.

1.3 The Uzbek Way of Transformation

In Soviet times, Central Asian societies were seen as more or less resistant to change and as preserving their way of life through rituals, identities and practices (Allworth 1989, Fierman 1991). The post-Soviet period can in certain aspects similarly be interpreted as a continuity of the past. Goals are no different than in the past. For the elites, the goal is to retain power and resources, for others, it is to keep their living standards at the level of the economic and social benefits of the past. The latter group is less successful. New policies introduced after independence left people without the benefits and security of the past. Individual responsibility and individualism within a capitalist economy replaced the caring Soviet state. But at the same time, commitment and labour power are highly demanded in this cotton monoculture.

Nevertheless, independence has brought significant changes to the lives of people. Loss of employment and social security as well as the unattainability of goods and services is one aspect of it. The past is remembered as the good times but it is clear that there is no way back. Within this context, the burden is passed down from one level to another and everybody passes the buck when it comes to failures. People on the local level thus carry the bulk of the burden of independence. In that context, family and relatives have become the basic unit that absorbs the problems and difficulties of its members. Family solidarity became important in dealing with the problems of everyday life. Simultaneously, depending on the specific problems, family and kin relations are also redefined. The kolkhoz of the Soviet period as a "total institution" (Humphrey 1998) disappeared without its place having been refilled by any other state institution. Family and kin started to take over the role of state institutions, which in the past had wide range of duties and responsibilities.

The Uzbek government, however, did not totally get out of the way of its citizens, especially in regards to their economic desires. Directly after independence, the government made it clear that prospective economic and political developments following a unique "Uzbek model" would be the best and most suitable one. President Karimov characterized this model by gradualism, which was to allow for a smooth parting from a centrally planned economy yet in the following years far more painted a picture of slow or unwilling, reluctant reforms. There was no official denial that changes had to be made regarding economic issues. However, gradual reforms were to prevent abrupt changes,

which were seen as a threat to the country's stability.

> "An analysis of the past period of our independent development reveals the solid basis of the Uzbek model of reforms. Today this is acknowledged by authoritative international economic organizations. But most importantly, everyday experience also proves its appropriateness. Post-Soviet reality obliges many post-Soviet leaders, politicians and economists to refer to the principles and features of our model of market reforms. ... We have chosen the most difficult road. ... We created a modern, technologically equipped base both for export oriented production and for filling our domestic market with home-made goods." (Karimov 1998:115f.)

This cautious attitude of slow reforms did have its advantages in the early 1990's yet within time it prevented necessary reforms such as convertibility of the currency. Authors such as Pomfret praise the wariness of the Uzbek government regarding the introduction of reform policies yet admit they were not sustainable since they burst the government's budget and had to be cut following the mid-1990's (2006:25). While cotton was under a price control as the main cash crop of the country, allowing small business for other agricultural products brought market forces partially to the Uzbek economy. Yet, large-scale privatization and agrarian reforms in Uzbekistan were still very limited compared to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In a similar way, Zettlemeyer argues that, although – or precisely because – Uzbekistan was "hesitant and idiosyncratic" regarding reforms, the country has experienced less of an output fall in comparison to other former Soviet republics and even a positive growth in 1996/97. He seeks answers to Uzbekistan's initial performance since "[O]bservers are often puzzled by Uzbekistan's output performance, typically because they think that the country should have done much worse given its hesitancy to engage in rapid market-oriented reforms and sustained macroeconomic stabilization-policies that have been widely credited with contributing toward milder transitional recessions and quicker and stronger recoveries". In this puzzle, he stresses the role of other variables as determinants such as "low initial industrialization, its cotton production and its self-sufficiency in energy" besides "structural reforms and macroeconomic policies" (Zettlemeyer 1999:276).

Thus, the transition to a market economy and related reforms occurred with significant restrictions yet at some point were introduced in Uzbekistan. While the market and prices for consumption goods were liberalized, the state

monopoly on natural resources and state procurement of cotton and wheat remained in power. In the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan's primary role was the production of cotton, followed by raw silk, fruits and vegetables. In the context of a restructuring of the rural economy after independence this is undeniably a serious challenge and not easy to handle. The Uzbek government tries to make its profit margin from cotton as high as possible. This is done by keeping local costs and procurement prices, which can be influenced, low, and to sell the products for world market prices. Using cheap or unpaid labour allows the government to thus create a huge gap between the procurement price and the export price of cotton. This unfair condition is able to exist since unemployment is high and people are ready to work for low – and usually delayed – wages or simply work in order to secure the possibility of getting access to the fields after harvest and being able to use them for their own cultivation until the next sowing season starts (cf. chapters 3 and 4).

Decoupled from the former social benefits, the Uzbek government tries to keep this system alive through limited changes in the economic structures. Humphrey, leaning on Verdery (1996), describes the lateral flows in the socialist system as one "... of products flowing 'upward' to the state and subsidies and inputs going 'downward' to the farms" (Humphrey 1998:444). In the contemporary Uzbek system, the "downward" flow or the giving back of cotton revenues to the direct producers happens in a very limited form. The improvements or reforms are mostly done within a frame, which allows the government to retain control of the agricultural output. In present Uzbekistan, the state tries to maintain its regulative and determinant role, and expects its citizens to obey the rules. This permanent liminal stage did not lead to any chaos or unrest under the strong hand of president Karimov, yet poverty, insecurity and out-migration did develop. Economic insecurity made some people ready to take more risks in entrepreneurial activities such as in trade. Some people were willing to take risks in agriculture and become - more or less - independent farmers (*fermer*). A lack of trust in institutions, however, appeared as significant components of life in independent Uzbekistan and allowed only a minority to prosper.

Parallel to the economic changes, the year 1991 made formerly internal borders "real" ones. This sudden "border feeling" has affected people's lives very directly. During Soviet times, republic borders did not carry the same meaning and consequent results as today. In the past, a "real" border was one

between the Soviet Union and other states with other economic and political agendas. These, however, had no relevance for the daily life of the people as they were basically impassable. A border in that sense did not exist and did not separate Soviet republics. The borders with Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan or Kazakstan were not perceived as real borders (Megoran 2002; Reeves 2007).

1.4 Theoretical Considerations

What post-socialist conditions actually are and how they are lived and experienced by individuals in former Soviet republics is the focus of this work. While focusing on this theme, it also poses the question of what "post-socialism" is and what remained "socialist". Does the demise of the Soviet Union and independence simply make those countries post-socialist? The aim of this work is not to discuss the meaning of these terms because this has already been done by many others (Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Chari and Verdery 2009; Verdery 1996). In the case of Uzbekistan, it is perhaps not terribly meaningful to talk about political and economic transformations in comparison to Eastern European cases. Still, however, the post-socialist era is at least nominally a fact and perceived as such, while it is an era in which socialist conditions consciously continue to exist. People live in this post-socialist world and, similar to flowing water, they try to find their way in a context in which resistance does not bring about change.[7] Everyday experiences of the residents in my two field settings, however, are not unique in every aspect to post-socialism. This is not to ignore that there are in fact new challenges with which one was not confronted before, yet within this frame, individuals calculate and act according to their own agenda and goals.

It does not matter how arbitrary products of the Soviet policy they were, both the borders and the titular ethnic group Uzbeks as such are; independence further necessitates a reformulation of the Uzbek identity as part of a nation building process that is seen as a requirement for political stability. The highly appreciated co-existence of different ethnic groups as a legacy of the past has also started to melt in this context. In that process, not only the external condition is decisive but also how Uzbek identity is conceptualised.

[7] More recently, Stenning and Hörschelmann discuss post-socialism in more detail. They also provide an overview of the studies, mainly focusing on Eastern Europe where „people resist the larger political and economic process of transformation (2008:314).

The permeability and the flexibility of Uzbekness make it easy for everyone to accept and make it applicable both in the long term or in a situational context.[8] Ethnic identity and other reference points such as nomadic versus sedentary, or local belongings, play an important role in everyday-life as well. Of course, independence has opened up a new platform of how ethnic and other identities are lived and expressed in relation to the conceptualization of national identity in Uzbekistan (Adams 2010).

In the following, I will differentiate between the role and importance of ethnicity and identity in social and economic spheres in people's everyday life. In the case of the social sphere, when we consider marriage patterns, which are strongly determined by kinship and locality, the role of ethnicity is not particularly prominent. Interactions and decisions in the daily life of a relatively insecure economic environment put actors in a situation in which they are forced, in order to reduce their risks, to carefully calculate the available resources before they act and make decisions. In this period of economic instability, not only is the risk of loss high but also the cost of a potential loss is significant for the livelihoods of people and may threaten their long-term survival. Some people avoid getting involved in any kind of economic or material interaction with others (be that lending money or becoming a *fermer*), others are highly engaged in it. For instance, land access is a very important subject and there is no inclusion or exclusion of actors from this competition on the basis of their ethnic belongings as one might expect. If there is a line, which separates and locates "us" and "them" (Elwert 1989, Eriksen 1993), then it is not drawn along ethnic belongings as a particular type of identity, since people with the same ethnic background can fall on both sides of the line as winners or losers of the game. Still, it is a significant instrument and it does no harm to show flexibility in this respect.

It may, perhaps, be better, however, to use the term identification instead of identity and the Uzbek case is also a good example of why. Since any actor's group attachment is not fixed and its contents are an aspect of change and flexibility, people evade strict definition traits by defining themselves by multiple markers (Schlee 2000, 2003; Finke 2006). However, when claiming a different group affiliation, one must somehow be convincing for other actors and display traits that make sense to others in order to change group belonging (Schlee 1989). Barth's understanding of ethnicity, which is considered to be

[8] On the meaning of Uzbek identity and how it is constructed locally see Finke (2006).

the instrumentalist approach, contains this flexibility; yet depending on the intention, differences are stressed or played down while retaining certain markers for constructing boundaries. He puts emphasis on the ethnic boundary, which defines the group, "not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1969:15). In the larger context, locality can override ethnicity and unite multiple identities in one setting while stressing difference against other places.

Drawing and fortifying internal as well as international borders after the demise of the Soviet Union has become a typical component of Uzbekistan as an independent nation-state, creating a new "we-group-processes" (Elwert 1989, Finke 2006). "We" creates a feeling of unity and also produces readiness to sacrifice one's own wishes for the sake of the whole. In the early years of independence and also during my fieldwork, this is expressed through patience and a level of sacrifice for the sake of the coming generations and the general future of the country.

Since the former Soviet stratification model and access to resources along the occupational status remained significant after independence, ethnicity in daily life or being a member of the titular ethnic group has not replaced the above and is not used to include or exclude others from scarce and valuable resources. Whoever was outside of the system in the past has not become part of it after independence and a change of group affiliation does not bring any benefits in this regard. If we look at interaction strategies in this context, we can observe some individuals who are involved in the new economic restructuring process since they have the necessary social and economic resources from the past and are better equipped to influence other people's strategies (Finke 2004). Others either do not have sufficient resources or they simply think that what they have is enough. Although they could make more, they do not want to have additional stress due to their insecure environment. This stems from their specific cost-benefit calculations, one might argue. Solidarity is not necessarily established and maintained along ethnic lines and kinship is also not a solidarity group by itself.

Changing sides in regards to group affiliation is a decision making process which actors have to pursue in a given situation for certain reasons. This should carry certain consequences or returns for the individual according to his or her aim. If ethnicity is one of the means that an individual has in order to gain access to certain spheres or resources, there must also be further conditions and a frame in which the interaction with others is made possi-

ble. Predictability of the behaviour of others and a certain degree of trust is necessary before the means are employed and used for one's aims. Moreover, trust and predictability is not only limited to the acts of other actors, also the environment in which these acts take place must offer a certain liability. Individuals want to act and invest under conditions they can trust and under which "the rules of the game" can be anticipated and be counted as valid in the same manner for all participants (North 1990:3). Institutions cover a wide spectrum from unwritten everyday norms and agreements up to the complex level of regulatory systems such as religion or the state. Through this regulation, a certain level of confidence and trust is created and maintained while misbehaviour is sanctioned.

This aspect has become a fundamental issue and determinant of the behaviour of the individuals in the post-Soviet context. Uzbekistan did not sink into chaos after independence but this does not mean that formal, state-backed institutions are trusted (Finke 2006). In fact, everyday norms of conduct and traditional regulatory mechanisms such as village elders may be much more effective in some circumstances. This failure by formal institutions, or better said the lack of trust in the legal system, has shaped the behavioural patterns of individuals and as a result their decision-making processes. Willingness to take risks and openness to new engagements in the economic sphere is strongly related to this aspect. Lack of trust in others and in the institutions has opened a space for certain people who are able to predict and calculate situations and who feel more confident than others due to the fact that they are equipped with better access to information, social networks and economic resources (North 1990, Ensminger 1992, Finke 2004).

If we consider the continuity of networks and the constraints that are created by actors on other actors in the form of inclusion and exclusion from various types of resources, this informal institutionalization shapes people's interaction possibilities. These inherited informal institutions, according to Gel'man, "...live at the expense of formal ones by occupying or penetrating them" (2004:1022). I argue in line with this that the strength of these arrangements derives from the actors located within the more formal structures who simultaneously are part of the inherited informal institutions. In the post-Soviet context, Uzbekistan has not created an environment, in which habitual practices of the past, both in the form of dealing with state resources through hording and stealing and of individuals acting within more or less corrupt net-

works, must be significantly changed concerning the behaviour of individuals (Verdery 1996; Ledeneva 1998). Trust is thus limited to certain actors, patron-client relationships and social networks while mistrust in formal institutions remains a survival strategy for individual actors (Gel'man 2004 1023).

I was not equipped to or concerned with placing the question of the state in my research. I was also not intending to analyze the political events, bureaucratic structure or Uzbek policymaking in detail. However, during my stay, not only because of the not so distant Soviet past or "fresh independence", but also because of neighbouring countries with different economic and political models, which had been shared until 1991, forced me to think more about the imagination of the state. This imagination was different in the two settings. The encountering with the state is challenging everyday life with everyday practices inspired me to follow its meaning somewhat more closely (cf. Gupta 1995). During my interviews, I encountered imaginations of the state when people would talk about their lives in the past and in the present. To a high degree, the understanding of the present is based on how they recalled the past.

Social networks, a variety of state or non-state institutions and re-shaped traditional and Soviet structures were all involved in governing activities and strategies when it came to shaping regimes of power in present-day Uzbekistan. While the state did not become the centre of my analysis, it emerged in multiple forms in everyday life as a highly relevant issue that I had to keep in mind. Furthermore, my informants, some of them more, some of them less, had the acting of the state in their minds and this shaped the quantity and the quality of information I gathered in the field. During my fieldwork, I encountered the state in numerous and multiple forms, some expected and some unexpected, each with different intensity and complexity. For instance, the role of formalized neighbourhoods (*mahalla*), to be discussed in detail in chapter five, is, according to my informants, based more on control and regulation of the local conditions than during the Soviet period. In a field site such as the Ferghana Valley, which directly bordered another country, the appearing and disappearing of state power and its local implementation shows how in everyday life the state is produced and reproduced. This was less obvious in the oasis of Bukhara.

Ferguson and Gupta discuss "spatial characteristics" of states in the form of "*verticality*" (the state is "above" society)" or "encompassment" (the state

encompasses its localities)". These are produced through routine bureaucratic practices. Beyond merely being a bureaucratic entity, however, the state is seen as "powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways" (2002:981). In order to understand state-reproduced "spatial orders" and "scalar hierarchies", it is necessary to look at "everyday practices of state institutions" since "routine operation of state institutions produces spatial and scalar hierarchies" (ibid: 984). According to these authors, states are imagined through metaphors and the social practices make these images effective and experienced. For "vertical encompassment", mundane rituals and procedures are seen necessary since through them imaginations are successful. Border surveillance as in Uzbekistan, is then a "body show" of the state, which displays the permeating character of the state (Ferguson & Gupta 2002).

1.5 Methods

As mentioned above, this dissertation is based on 14 months of fieldwork in two different provinces of Uzbekistan. My stay in the capital Tashkent was mostly related to bureaucratic work and formalities. These stays were also useful in regards to certain facilities, which were of limited availability in the countryside, like the Internet or bathing opportunities.

Doing fieldwork in a country like Uzbekistan has never been easy since independence, yet conductibility has changed over the years. My experience certainly confirms the importance and strength of participant observation as an important tool of ethnology while certain other methods displayed limitations and restrictions. Without knowing anybody in the beginning, the support, understanding and help that I got in a small place, which did not have the anonymity of a town or a city, was ideal considering the circumstances. Entering the field and establishing a certain amount of trust, of course, took time in both sites. I tried to observe as much as I could and get a general idea of things and at the same time study certain cases more intensively. Aiming to gain in-depth knowledge through case studies helped me to investigate the casual mechanisms of local structures - especially when thinking about decision-making processes and coping strategies following the collapse of the old system.

Other research methods employed included in-depth interviews with indi-

viduals and groups, as well as surveys. At the beginning, I had some self-made disappointing experiences. I had brought my digital recorder and wanted to record my interviews with the permission of my interview partner (interviewee). The first was a *fermer*. The interview was short; the answers were almost the same for every question and my interview partner quickly looked bored as well as uncomfortable. It was simply unsatisfactory. The coming interviews were not very different. This was when I came to the conclusion that it made little sense to talk to people in this way, and I even wondered if it made sense to continue my stay here. On evenings, when we would all sit together, my activities of the day were reported to other members of the family as well as to whom I had talked and what about. This frustrating period came to an end not only because I gradually became more and more accepted in the family, in the village and by local authorities, but also because I got rid of the recorder. One day during an interview, I was suddenly told to "press the stop button; there is no need to record what I tell you.". This was the lesson that made my field stay possible. Visiting families, sitting in the kitchens of different houses and peeling potatoes was important and useful for me in order to find answers to my questions, which occurred more in passing. Taking notes during talks was possible but not with every theme, especially concerning economic or political issues.[9]

From my experience in Bukhara, I did not even consider taking my recorder to the Ferghana Valley. I felt free to walk around and talk to people as I had been accustomed to in Bukhara. The *mahalla* structures in the Valley gave the impression that things were more under control than in Bukhara. The reputation of the *vodi* with ethnic clashes and Islamic fundamentalism may be the reason that there was more control on the part of the local state on me as well as my interview partners. In the beginning, I was often accompanied by *mahalla* committee members. Sometimes, it was to politely introduce me to people, sometimes it was in order to know why and what I wanted to talk to them about. I also heard that a few families were visited and interviewed by the secret police about my visits and our conversations. This was not the case in Bukhara or at least I did not notice it. It was a significant restriction to my data gathering and I inevitably missed valuable information because of

[9] In some cases, I could not even take notes during my interviews. I had to reconstruct the conversation and data after I went home. This was often the case in the Ferghana Valley. See also Baykal's work in Samarqand with similar experience (2007:14).

this mutual fear.

Being refused interviews, or being invited in order to show me Uzbek hospitality yet not being willing to talk about the issues I wanted to know about, was part of my research. Either people did not have the time and interest or talking frankly to me might reveal activities that one does not really want to share. I had the intention of doing a household survey, like the tape recording, which was to be conducted in the early stage of the research. I expected the rather formal character of the survey not to be very supportive to my intention of a long-term stay. In this context, making a survey in fact endangered the existing trust relationships with informants and local officials. Yet again, unsuccessful experiences belong to the field site reality.

Drawing diagrams and charts and talking about kinship were the most relaxed topics. If gossip and conversations between doors or in the kitchen while cooking did not exist, I believe a large part of reality would be missing in my observation. During my fieldwork, depending on the season or occasion, I attended various meetings, rituals ("It will be interesting for you, you should come"), and was introduced to different people. Constructing genealogies was not only interesting but also relaxing and "harmless" for both sides. Talking about genealogy was a way of drawing a map of the village by showing the relatedness of people to the place and to each other.

So, with whom did I talk? Women, men, children, teachers, police and military, doctors, kolkhoz workers, *fermer*, government officials and village elders. Some people I was not able to find, some people did not want to talk to me. For instance, a former kolkhoz chief never got back to me when I asked him if he had time to tell me about the kolkhoz and its history. One may only speculate as to why. Although I felt integrated and welcomed in both field sites, the reality of having to be cautious changed neither for me and nor for my informants. Interviews, talks and chats were variably long and took place under different circumstances, which was sometimes good, yet, sometimes unhelpful. In some cases, when I would visit a family, many people would notice my visit and some of them would then come and visit. Depending on the person, this changed the atmosphere of our conversation, which was then often monopolized by the visitor - to the better or worse.

Getting official data from the village administration, the kolkhoz or the *xokimiyat* was time consuming and often that information itself was contradictory. Chasing after statistics was frowned upon and made officials uneasy.

Being seen too often in the corridors of official buildings was not helpful for my longer stay either. Getting official data through other channels (via acquaintances) was the most effective way. In general, access was only allowed irregularly and nobody seemed to know why. The researchers I met in Tashkent, historians, political scientists, linguists and ethnologists, had all made similar experiences. This information exchange shows how erratic the conditions of research can be in different years or even in the same year with or without comprehensible reasons. For the officials, no matter where they were from, the presence of a foreigner in their *tuman* made it necessary for them to keep an eye on that person. Especially a border *tuman* such as Marxamat legitimizes any kind of control from the official's side. I was never directly refused any information, but the responses were late and tiresome so that I either had to decide on my own and stop asking or I was informed by other people not to follow this issue. These delays, pretexts and excuses were mostly given politely, explaining that I should come back the next day or that the person responsible for the issue would be back in a while.

As it turned out, talking about agriculture is a kind of taboo since it is an entangled topic covering all state breakdowns, malfunctions, and collapses. It all revolves around corruption and an unlawful state. Simultaneously, it is all about what determines daily decisions and the exchange of information by people. Everyday life comprises numerous concealed routines, which can be mundane for some disciplines and researchers but also for the people who practice them. Yet exactly this is the strength of anthropology and its methods – namely to find out about these routines and about ordinary life, about the knowledge, skills and insights people live, cope and deal with. In everyday life, where mundane practises, interactions and daily encounters occur, these routines can be discovered. They necessitate a range of survival strategies and skills while the appropriation of new technologies rather failed, as they proved unaffordable or incompatible to local conditions: Thus, in contrast the significance of traditional knowledge increases. Especially the transmission of knowledge about agriculture and the reparation of tools to the next generation play an important role. As Ingold put it, "... through training and experience in the performance of a particular task" skills are incorporated (2000:5). Fear of any kind of loss necessitates attention and a careful division of labour among family members along gender and generation, through which again knowledge

is transmitted (Flitsch 2008:269).[10]

I count myself lucky that despite these difficulties and restrictions, I altogether had a pleasant fieldwork period with the people who hosted me. There were many factors and actors involved in that process. Being watchful was not only concerned me but also the people who opened their doors to me. They felt responsible for me and did everything to make me feel well and enjoy the Uzbek hospitality. But they also felt responsible for me to finish my project and gather the necessary data. They took my work seriously and I take their concerns and worries within the existing political system seriously. That is why some questions remain unasked. Although a mutual trust existed within the family, this did not mean there were no limits. But it made this fieldwork possible.

Gender is a further factor that can open or close doors concerning certain topics and encounters. In Uzbekistan, the women of the house should feel comfortable in the presence of a long-term guest who is unknown in every aspect. Relations with them is thus of outmost importance. I think gender support was an inevitable factor during my research, which created a comfortable and welcome atmosphere. This allowed me to gain valuable information about how things work. Contacts, networks and trustful relations within the community are not only the means to deal with problems in the field, but are at the same time the principle support when it comes to data gathering.

Language skills are of key importance in any anthropological research. My Uzbek was fluent enough to follow all conversations in both field sites without any external help. Living with and within a family was not only very valuable for improving my language skills but also for many other things which one can better appreciate after a while in the field. I learned a lot about daily life, decisions, plans and other things another method would not have been able to detect. Me doing participant observation was also enjoyed by the residents of the villages. I was continuously informed about and taken along to meetings or ceremonies that locals thought might be interesting for my work. If participant observation is one of the methods of anthropological fieldwork, it was the one

[10] For instance, during Soviet times people did not really worry about their expenses and bought bread and other foodstuff from shops since they could afford it. During my stay, this was seldom the case; it was mostly backed at home. Although people argue that „home made bread“ is also more tasteful - to which I agree - the economic situation is the main reason for this. Even in the rayon centre, in three or four floor houses, people have a *tandir* in the garden. Cf. Flitsch (2008) on knowledge and skills - and specifically the role of woman - for China.

best suited to Uzbekistan, my field sites and definitely my research theme. I am aware that participant observation does not allow us to gain information on certain subjects such as local statistics, the size of the fields, the amount of water for irrigation or salaries. There is no doubt that as many methods as possible should be used complementary. Yet not all of the methods I would have preferred to use were possible.

Map 1.1: Field Sites Marxamat and Romitan, based on map by Jutta Turner

Chapter 2

Ecological Setting and Historical Background

2.1 The State of Uzbekistan

Location and Geography

The contemporary state of Uzbekistan is located in the very heart of Central Asia and as such was throughout its history a place where different populations mixed with each other creating a complex mosaic of peoples and languages. The interactions with the wider world were characterized by its nature as a landmass in-between that could both hamper and enable the movement of people and good, be these long-distance trade routes or whole-scale migrations, connecting China, India, the Middle East and Europe (Hambly 1966; Soucek 2000). This allowed economic and cultural exchange between those regions to flourish. In particular, various religious faiths, including Buddhism, Christianity and Islam made their impact on the region and in turn helped their further spread (Sinor 1969; Heissig and Klimkeit 1987).

Among the former Soviet republics that gained independence in 1991 Uzbekistan is the only one with a common border with all the other Central Asian republics. In the north and south it borders larger republics like Kazakstan and Turkmenistan while in the west and south-west it is the mountainous Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The shortest border is in the south with Afghanistan. As most of the region this is landlocked territory. Rivers give life before they vanish shortly after reaching the plains or emptying into one of the few, mostly salty lakes. Deserts, steppes and mountain ranges shape the landscape spotted

by fertile valleys and oases. Major rivers include the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya and their tributaries like the Zarafshan that have provided the water for intensive irrigation for millennia (Frye 1996: 15–18).

Corresponding to the environmental conditions, the history of the region was characterized by the coexistence of two complementary production systems, namely nomadic pastoralism and sedentary agriculture based on irrigation. Their interaction is a defining characteristic of the region's history and until present it plays a significant role. Before modern and intensive agriculture, arable land made up only a small portion of Central Asia. Nevertheless, the sedentary population probably always exceeded that of the pastoralists who in case of conquest usually quickly assimilated in cultural terms (Khazanov 1992; Subtelny 1994). This nomad and sedentary dichotomy is still strongly expressed and used as a decisive criterion, which separates and distinguish one group from another.

> "If nomads occupied the most characteristic place of human presence in Inner Asia, they were by no means its only inhabitants, and agriculture as well as urban life have flourished in many parts of it. Settlements usually owed their existence to mountains, but indirectly: agriculture was mostly of the irrigated oasis type, dependent on rivers or underground conduits whose sources feed from rainfall and glaciers of Inner Asian mountains. Dry farming depending on rainfall was not absent, but it in turn occurred chiefly in the higher elevations and foothills of the mountains or, more recently, in the northern latitudes of the steppe belt" (Soucek 2000:4).

Agriculture has had a long history in the region (Harris and Gosden 1996). While in some places dating back much earlier, by the beginning of the first millennium BC it had reached all the major oases in the southern parts (Khazanov 1992). This was also the time when the first cities emerged, some of which survived more or less at the same spot until today (Frye 1996: 32–34). The domestication of animals, it is believed, may go back as early as that, although a specialized type of pastoral nomadism developed much later (Khazanov 1984, 1990; Masanov 2003). With trade, revenues from the Silk Road the region became not only of commercial but also of great cultural importance and became the connection link between Europe and China (Golden 1992: 142ff.).

Besides land, water is also a scarce resource in the Uzbekistan. Oases like Bukhara or the Ferghana Valley get their water from the rivers coming down the mountains. By now, they all have reduced flow. Since decades the cotton

monoculture in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan reduced the water flow of these rivers, which contributed to the well-known tragic consequence of the shrinkage of the Aral Sea. Irrigation has changed this not only by making cotton fields from steppe and desert land but also from grain fields and orchards. Cotton fields shape the landscape all over Uzbekistan with other components like huge irrigation canals and kolkhozcu on the fields (Soucek 2004:8). Only in the western parts large sectors of semi-deserts dominate the picture. Intensive use of pesticides and salinization of the soil affect not only the efficiency of agriculture with decreasing cotton yields but also has significant consequences on health of the people (Critchlow 1991, Capisani 2000). This is particularly the case in the western regions of Uzbekistan. In the following chapters I will show how environmental, economic, political and other factors have influenced the lives of people in the two regions where I collected my data for this study. I will show that local conditions put certain limits and that people adapt to this making the best out of it, within their capacities and possibilities. It will be shown that this also a matter of individual decisions.

The Coexistence of Turks and Iranians in Transoxania

In this context the ethnogenesis of the Uzbeks presents a paradigmatic case as a result of a continual mixing of populations, nomadic and sedentary, from all over Central Asia (Golden 1992: 39ff.; Soucek 2000; Finke 2006). During the early centuries AD, the oases were populated by people speaking East-Iranian languages like the Sogdians and the Khorezmians (Souchek 2001:5). To the north, the nomadic Cimmerians and Scythians also spoke related languages. According to Golden communication with them was possible (1992:46). Although the majority of the population believed a Central Asian variant of Zoroastrism, Buddhism, Nestorianism and Manichaeism also gained in influence (Frye 1996:153).

By the sixth century AD, a new linguistic group arrived from the eastern steppes. In the course of the expansion of the first Türk Qaghanate, all the oases in what is nowadays Uzbekistan came under domination of its western wing (Golden 1992: 127ff.; Soucek 2000: 51ff.). After the Qaghanate's final disintegration in the eigthth century, the Turks founded petty states governing the local oases but were soon absorbed by the local Iranian population. According to Frye (1996), while the Iranian nomads were assimilated by the Turkic

groups, their sedentary cousins mostly became vassals. Some nomads also settled in the fertile regions of Transoxania and the Ferghana Valley (Bosworth and Bolshakov 1997). Nomadism, although agriculture increased in importance, remained significant for the people (Golden 1992: 176ff.).

The rise of Turkic states coincided with the arrival of Islam in Central Asia. Starting from the first Arab presence by crossing the Amu Darya in 674, the early eighth century saw the factual conquest of Transoxania. Resistance of Turkic nomads and Soghdian sedentaries were suppressed successfully and by the ninth century Islam dominated in the urban areas while in the countryside earlier beliefs survived for some more time (Frye 1996: 202ff.). The Turkic groups along the northern edges of the belt of oases become the first to be Islamicized (Golden 1992: 196–9). In that process, wandering Sufis, in particular members of the Yassawi order, played a significant role (Paul 1991; DeWeese 1994).

During the following Samanid rule – the last period of Iranian supremacy in the region – a flourishing economy and a cultural blossoming was established. The works of Ibn Sina, Al-Khorezmi and Al-Beruni were from this period and they are the proud of contemporary Uzbekistan. Linguistically the Samanids were different than earlier populations in Central Asia. During this time, the Western-Iranian tongue New Persian emerged as lingua franca of the region and replaced the older East Iranian languages (Soucek 2000: 70ff.). At the end of the tenth century the Samanids were gradually replaced by new Turkic dynasties as the Ghaznavids and the Qarakhanids (Frye 1997; Bosworth 1997; Paul 2002). These had already converted to Islam, which helped the acceleration of the Turkification of the local Iranian population (Subtelny 1994).

A further crucial event in the history of Transoxania was the Mongol invasion in the 13th century. Linguistically, Mongols made up only a small portion of the army while the bulk was presumably Turkic-speakers, in their majority of the north-western branch. Settling in the oases, pastoralists not only became farmers but also took over the eastern Turkic dialect spoken by the Qarakhanids and other groups who had already been there (Golden 1992: 291ff.). This situation would continue during the following Timurid rule in Transoxania. The period of Timur and his successors in many ways represented the culmination of the symbiosis of Turks and Iranians, of nomads and sedentaries that is an essential part of Transoxanian culture and society (Rossabi 1994; Finke 2006). At the same time, Islam gained more importance in

the political discourse (Fierman 1991; Manz 1992, 1994).

During the second half of the fourteenth century the pastoralists settling to the north of the Timurid realm came to be known as Uzbeks, the name probably deriving from a descendant of Chinggis Khan (Golden 1992: 330ff.). In 1500, under the rule of Muhammad Shaybani, the Uzbek confederation invaded Transoxania putting an end to Timurid rule (Soucek 2000: 144ff.). Babur, as the last Timurid fled and later founded the Moghul dynasty in India (Foltz 1998). From the beginning the Uzbek state was unstable and later split into three independent territories, the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanates of Khiva (Khorezm) and Qoqand (in the Ferghana Valley). In all three, the Chinggisid descendants of Muhammad Shaybani were replaced in the following centuries (Becker 1968; Soucek 2000: 177–93).

All three Uzbek states were not only multi-ethnic in nature but also their populations differentiated according to partly overlapping criteria. The main dividing line was drawn between the nomadic pastoralists (mainly Kazaks, Kyrgyz and Turkmens) and the sedentary agriculturalists, the predecessors of modern Uzbeks and Tajiks, who inhabited mainly the central heartland of Transoxania and Khorezm. At that time, both terms were referring to different communities while their meaning varied also regionally. Similar to present day usage in some regions the label Uzbek was used for Turkic-speaking sedentary population. In other areas it defined groups depending on pastoralism while Tajik referred to all sedentaries irrespective of language (Fragner 1998; Holzwarth 2005). In the end the Turkic-speaking population constituted the origin of the Uzbek nationality. This included non-tribal population, mostly assimilated former Iranian speakers who lived in the region prior to the Uzbek conquest, earlier Turkic tribes and the Qipchaq-speaking groups who arrived since the Shaybanid took possession of the land (Karmysheva 1976; Zhdanko 1978; Shanijazov 1978; Baldauf 1991; Fragner 1998; Ilkhamov 2002, 2004; Finke 2006). Locality replaced tribal organisation in settled Turkic speakers community and identity and social relations were defined primarily via common residence. Regional reference points such as Bukharalik and Ferghanalik were prevailing and more significant than ethnonyms such as Uzbek and Tajik (Becker 1973; Matley 1973; Schoeberlein 1994).

Russian and Soviet Rule

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century the lands north of the oases, used predominantly by Kazak nomads, began to be exposed to the Tsarist Empire's invasion. In the second half of the nineteenth century Russian troops reached further south, capturing most of western Central Asia, which was now called Russian Turkestan. Cities like Tashkent in 1865 and Samarqand in 1868 were conquered. The Amir of Bukhara accepted Russian suzerainty in the same year, and the same happened to the Khan of Khiva five years later. The Khanate of Qoqand, as the third political entity was in 1876 directly integrated into the state structure. With the territory seized from Bukhara and Khiva and Qoqand the General Government of Turkestan was created (Becker 1968: 25ff.; MacFadyen 2006:8ff).

Interfere of Russian colonial rule into local affairs in Central Asia and the intermingling with the local population did not happen on a large scale so that life did not change much at first for the local population. As mostly urban settlers in separate quarters their contact with the locals was limited (Bacon 1966; Becker 1968; Allworth 1990). Putting pastureland under agriculture brought changes and transformations to the region in the coming future. Land use had been based on wheat, barley or alfa alfa but now cotton became the major crop in the oases (Thurman 1999; O'Hara 2000; Bichsel, 2009). Officially, the still independent states Khiva and Bukhara at the end of nineteenth century becoming more and more dependent on Russia (Becker 1968: 125ff.). Trade of agricultural products also gained more volume. Especially in the Ferghana Valley, in the former Khanate of Qoqand, cotton became almost the sole export.

In 1917 the Bolsheviks gained power and hoped to easily gain the support of the people in Central Asia. However, readiness and enthusiasm for the new regime – altering the existing social order and its attitudes towards religion – was less than expected (Northrop 2000). This period led not only revolts but also to huge numbers of people fleeing to Afghanistan, China, Turkey and other destinations (Shahrani 1979; Shalinsky 1979; Svanberg 1988). Bukhara and Khiva in the beginning became nominally independent People's Soviet republics.

Besides promoting economic transformation, a distinctive element of early Soviet rule was the creation of ethnic and territorial boundaries so far alien to

the region. In the 1920s and 1930s "the establishment of a national territory and government institutions, the standardization of a national language, and the emergence of a mass educational system" was accomplished in the region (Edgar 2004:3). This had already begun during tsarist colonial rulers and continued within the Soviet state in a radical form. In that process every individual had to be assigned to one particular ethnic or national group. Territory and cultural distinctiveness were created for these groups. According to most authors, in the case of the sedentary population of Central Asia, the blurriness and porousness of boundaries between groups made the creation by Soviet design enormously difficult. So, for example, Tajiks and Uzbeks who make up the majority of the settled population in the core areas of Soviet Central Asia today, and there were not divided by any clear boundaries (Hirsch 1997; Schoeberlein 1994; Edgar 2004:19-20). They married each other, were largely bilingual and one language had elements of the other one. Neither language nor descent are useful categories to identify people (Finke 2006).

Each of the major thus established groups was also awarded an administrative-territorial unit. In 1936 the national delimitation processes was almost completed and five Soviet Republics had been established: Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. What happened in Central Asia was not unusual since in other parts of the Soviet Union similar divisions were created (Martin 2001). From the side of Soviet authorities a positive attitude of many Central Asians to this subject was expected since:

> "Interest in a unified Turkistan was limited to a small group of urban intellectuals, many of whom subsequently became leading figures in the Uzbek republic. The elites of other groups were less enthusiastic, fearing that pan-Turkistani unity would mean Uzbek domination. Turkmen and Kazaks, in particular, complained that they were underrepresented and ill-treated in republics where they were in the minority" (Edgar 2004: 47).

However, along the planned border line there were people whose dialects were in-between, e.g., Turkmen and Uzbek, their genealogies ambiguous and they could not define to which group they belong (Edgar 2004: 60). Others switched for more or less opportunistic reasons (Baldauf 1991). Uzbekistan had territorial boundaries that seemed to have been drawn in a particularly arbitrary way and therefore many people were forced to register as Uzbeks precisely to make these borders appear to make more sense (Allworth 1990;

Schoeberlein 1994; Subtelny 1994; Finke 2006). At the same time, the Soviet definition of Uzbekness clearly favoured the sedentary elements and its boundaries were drawn generously (Finke 2006).

Martin names the Soviet Union "the world's first Affirmative Action Empire" which was intensively busy with the practice of ethnic labelling and indoctrination of it. Ethnicity was seen as an "inherent, fundamental, and crucially important characteristic of all individuals" (Martin 2001:1, 449). The Soviet state created structures so that its citizens were regularly confronted with their nationality question as a part of their everyday life. In 1932 the internal passports with a line indicating ones ethnicity was introduced. This information was "not a neutral piece of information", it brought both a crucial advantage or disadvantage on one's personal life. According to Martin, the declaration of nationality on the passports helped "reinforcing the belief, and the social fact that, national identity was primordial and inherited" (2001: 449).

All these developments were done under surveillance of the government in Moscow but it did not mean that local realities and local bargaining did not play a role. During the border-drawing phase people tried to achieve their territorial claims in contrast to Moscow's intentions (Hirsch 1997). At the same time, having the name of a republic or an autonomous region did not mean that much. As mentioned before, the Russian population was mainly urban and they occupied most of the bureaucratic positions especially during the beginning of socialist rule. With korenizatsiya, or indigenization, it was aimed at increasing the number of local functionaries and members of the communist party. But this policy brought reproaches and accusations of locals with nationalist orientations so that during the 1930s, this policy was reversed and replaced. During the Brezhnev period it was revived and in the early 1980s the famous Uzbek "cotton scandal" with unfilled plans and undelivered cotton left its marks in the region (Critchlow 1991:4of). Accusations like corruption, nepotism and misuse of collective property were militating against Moscow's expectations.

In the process of building socialism by campaigns attacking religion or directed to women's liberation took also its share (Northrop 2004; Kamp 2006) How successful these campaigns were, what was preserved under the label of Islam and tradition, is long debated. Benningsen and Broxup (1983) anticipated in their book, "The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State" a significant role to Islam for the collapse of the Soviet Union (cf. Kemper 2009:9). The collapse

of the Soviet Union showed that these assumptions were not felicitous. After independence the Central Asian republics, each have their own way of handling freedom of religion as other realms of society, or economy. Northrop argues that a broadband label with "a vast variety of local customs and religious practices" namely "Muslim identitiy" was claimed by people (2004:17).

Independent Uzbekistan

In 1991 the willingness to accept the independence and dissolving of the Union was not very enthusiastic in Uzbekistan.[1] First of September since then is celebrated as Independence Day in Uzbekistan, which also became one of the members of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Since then the country is under the rule of Islam Karimov who was the general secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan and as such the leading figure in the republic since 1989 (Akbarzadeh 1996; Fierman 1997). Not only the president but also the new elites within the following years showed a continuum as being former communists functionaries in their majority. The same thing was also the case in rural areas where in many cases former chiefs of collectives and other significant position holders stayed at least in useful network positions and also passed those over to their children.[2]

The democratic movements and the opposition to president Karimov was not long living since after a short period of tolerance they were banned by the government (Fierman 1997; Capisani 2000). Any kind of movement and demand were interpreted as a threat to internal peace and harmony so that the government kept a stick control over all live spheres until present time. The civil war in Tajikistan in the early 1990s, internal violent unrests like in Andijon in 2005 as well as the situation in Afghanistan were examples that were used to consolidate this power. Until today, the term of presidency is regularly renewed (Kangas 1994; Akbarzadeh 1996b; Fierman 1997). Karimov's power is not questioned or seriously challenged. He determines the destiny of the country and makes all appointments, which furthermore strengthen his power. In the provinces governors are appointed and removed from their positions by him. As to be expected, the juridical system is also under his control as

[1] Kemper mentions that according to referendums conducted in 1991, 80 to 90% of the population of the Central Asian republics voted for staying a part of a reformed Soviet Union (2009:9).

[2] See also Trevisani (2009).

the president exerts total control over legislation and the execution of laws (Fierman 1997: 384ff.). Human rights violation, censorship on the media, and noticeable presence of secret service enforce this policy. The number of people as suspects put in jail, accused of their intentions to overthrow the regime or of religious fundamentalism, is tremendous. Fair trail and legal support is not the case for the suspects and their families are also intimidated so that they cannot support their relatives properly.[3] The post-Soviet period did not start with serious political reforms, which until today are missing or limited to a renaming of places and institutions to remind people of the independency of Uzbekistan and its cultural richness. For that purpose in 1992, the statue of Lenin on the central square of Tashkent was removed, and the place renamed as 'Independence Square'. In 1993, Amir Timur replaced Karl Marx's sculpture (Hegarty 1995).

Not different than with other republics in the region, Uzbekistan's population is heterogeneous. But the contemporary politic has usbekisation on its agenda. For the minorities, for instance, to attend native language schools within time became impossible since schools are closed or do not have enough teaching material in the native language. Also, in order to increase the future opportunities of the children parents prefer to send their children to an Uzbek school (Finke 2006). Especially Tajiks were affected from this policy and its consequences. The relations with direct neighbours are often in the news, being either accused of how weak they are in their fight against terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism or with issues like water theft or drug trafficking. In particular, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are described as "weak" countries, which cannot manage their borders and deal with their problems.

Islam and Islamic fundamentalism in Uzbekistan are other debated issues inside and outside the country. Images of terrorism especially after 9/11 and developments in Afghanistan are used as a threat also for the Uzbek state, the fight against it legitimises a strong and controlling state, which aims to crush any kind of oppositional movement. It is sure that groups like the IMU, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, had contacts to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, while Hizb-u-Tahrir is much less clear in their ideological orientation and political practices. But how radical these movements are and whether they are aimed at establishing some type of Sharia-based policy and

[3] See for the reiterating accreditation denial of Human Rights Watch representative in Uzbekistan http://enews.fergananews.com/article.php?id=2685 accessed: 27.12.2010

the support among the population are open questions.[4] These questions open also the role of Islam in post-Soviet context and its survival during the Soviet period. Just counting the number of mosques and observing revival of Islamic practices are insufficient hints to say about the role of Islam in the region.

Inherent problems of the socialist system had been the main reason behind the need for change. Unfulfilled production targets and shortage of resources were one side of the problem while at the same time resources were wasted and cheated within collective structures by collective members. Initiatives like rewards to bring members of the collective to work more efficiently were not enough to get the system moving. Radical reforms were necessary and that occurred under Gorbachov as the politics of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. It was not rare that people described Gorbachov's period in opposition to the Brezhnev period, as the one that brought the end of the Soviet Union, as a "break down". His period also had other associations for people like increasing criminality, which caused people in towns to install additional iron doors to their homes, and economically the end of a relatively secure way of life (Werner 1997; Zanca 1999; Finke and Sancak 2007). Few people saw this end inevitable when they looked retrospectively at their lives. How the things could have the same price in the whole of the Soviet Union, and why the costs of production were not reflected on the price of goods was not something thought about too often.

In order to protect itself from post-Soviet economic contraction, the "Uzbek way" of reform was introduced. National self-reliance was the main purpose in the energy and in the food sector that should be ensured by a gradual, step by step approach to macro-economic, market oriented reforms (Gleason 2003:119). This self-sufficiency strategy aimed to reduce grain imports. For this, a shift from a nearly exclusive concentration on cotton was necessary in order to realize food security (cf. chapter three). Parallel to this, reminders of the old system, at least in form of names, were eliminated and replaced with Uzbek terms. Without introducing significant reforms in their structures and remaining as a part of a planned economy the kolkhoz and sovkhoz were converted into collective farms and got Uzbek names (Ilkhamov 1998). It is not only the administrative structure that remained relatively intact from Soviet times, but also much of the socialist economic organization. With this, for-

[4] According to Schoeberlein (2001) and Zanca (2003) Uzbek government may actually foster rather than deter the fundamentalist threat.

mer elites maintain their power monopoly by controlling both the production process and the allocation of resources. Uzbekistan was an agrarian country and the economy is still largely based on agricultural products and their processing.[5] The plans from the government and its ministries are handed down via the *viloyat* to the *tuman* and farms. For the production these administrative units were put in competition and in harvest periods the statistics were broadcasted by reporting progress and success at the fulfilment of the plans.

The state's role as the key actor and manager in the economy brought along positive outcomes in the early years of independence and additionally prices of the main consumer goods and services were controlled rigidly. The neighbours Kazakstan and especially Kyrgyzstan implemented structural reforms with less hesitation (Gleason 2003:119, Pomfret 1995, 2006). The aforementioned policies in order to avoid post-Soviet chaos or to soften the shock after the demise of Soviet system led to a milder recession compared with other states in the region. The other side of the coin showed rapid growth in unregulated trade, low quality of goods at the market, avoidance of tax and custom duties and capital flight, rising unemployment and high inflation (Gleason 2003:124). Strict currency control on Uzbek sum did not create favourable trade climate and in 1996 the IMF froze credits to Uzbekistan because of the overvalued, artificial currency exchange rate. The first step for the abolition of multiple currency exchange rates came in 1999 with the aim of full convertibility of the sum in 2000. The situation was not really different during most of the 2000s and while the abolishment of a multiple exchange rate regime was announced these still continued to exist.[6] This has also consequences for foreign investments (Gleason 2003:124-25, Bartlett 2001).[7]

With the demise of the socialist system the majority of the population has suffered a dramatic decrease in living standards. Those who still have an employment as a teacher or a nurse are lucky but receive salaries far from being enough. In that context appropriation of new skills and recalling of old ones became more significant in order to survive in post-socialist Uzbekistan. In this situation, for most people there was no need to keep themselves busy with the names and the legal status of the new institutions since their daily life

[5] Gas, oil and gold are the major mineral resources (Capisani 2000:111).

[6] During the period of my fieldwork, the black market rate fluctuated between 100 and 150 sum for one US dollar.

[7] For an overview of economic reforms see Craumer (1995), Pomfret (1995), Biermann (1996), Rumer (2000) and Kaser (1998); on land reforms see Lerman (1998).

was not touched by these differences. They bothered rather about lost jobs, shortened or disappearing social benefits as well as unpaid and insufficient salaries. Their daily life – what bothers them and how they cope with the problems – was keeping not only them but also me busy. This point makes the main focus of this work.

2.2 The Oasis of Bukhara

Ecology

The city of Bukhara, which gives the name to the oasis and to the *viloyat*, is besides Samarqand probably the most famous place in Central Asia. It has also been one of the regions political and cultural centres for millennia. The city centre sprinkled with historical and architectural monuments from medieval and later periods, and is often described as a "treasure" (Gangler et al. 2004:15). According to archaeological finds starting from the Bronze Age this was a region with continuous human settlement. Located along the long distance trade route of the "Silk Road", this was also a source of wealth for Bukhara. Caravans from China to the west – to Russia, the Middle East and Europe – converged here and their variety of influence was far beyond the purely economic (Frye 1997, Gangler et al. 2004:17).

The oasis of Bukhara is approximately fifty kilometres wide and located in a vast desert area, which stretches from the Amu Darya in the south to the Syr Darya in the north, and from the Aral Sea in the west to the western foothills of the Turkestan Range in the east (cf. Finke 2006). The area has some natural elevations otherwise it is almost entirely flat lowland. It is a landscape where water determines and shapes topography by creating abrupt boundaries where the oasis ends and the desert begins. The neighbouring Qizil-Qum ('Red Sand') and Qara-Qum ('Black Sand') deserts host a small number of nomads. The only major river within the oasis is the Zarafshan, originating from mountains of present-day Tajikistan. Along this river besides Bukhara many of the most famous cultural centres were located like Panjiqand or Samarqand.

Basis to this was sufficient water of the Zarafshan River, which made the region one of the most fertile of Central Asia. In the absence of smaller ravines (as exist in the Ferghana Valley) the Bukhara oasis has always relied totally on

the waters that descend from the mountains further to the east. Rainfall is not sufficient to support cultivation. The oasis was nourished by complex systems of canals, which allowed to grow a variety of agricultural products from grain, vegetables and fruits (including apples, cherries, melons and grapes) to the fatal cotton. Tending mulberry trees for the production of silk is also a long-established industry. Some of the canals have been in use since pre-Islamic times even with names from that period (Barthold [Frye] 1986: 1295). Under Russian protectorate, its economic interests became more and more dominant and Bukhara exported cotton and dried fruits, and acquired manufactured commodities.

The climate is arid and continental. Especially hot summer months with temperatures reaching 45 °C and monthly averages around 35 °C are laborious and exhausting (UNEP 1999). Spring and autumn with moderately temperatures are warm and relatively short each lasting only a few weeks. Winter and spring are the main precipitation months. Precipitation is less than 150 millimetres annually, often dropping below 100 millimetres, and it can be also occasionally observed that the desert is blanketed lightly with snow (cf. Makhmudovich 2005). Beyond the irrigation zone natural vegetation is sparse. Saxaul (*Haloxylon ammodendron*) can be found in the interior parts of the desert. Since it has been used for heating purposes and its warmth is highly appreciated, there is a significant decrease in the number of trees in the vicinity of the oases.[8] Further away, the desert zone has been used for centuries by pastoralists for herding camels, sheep and goats. The loamy soil is fertile and contains almost no rocks. With rain the ground turns into mud within a few hours, unpaved or not anymore paved roads in settlement areas often become impassable. Shoes of pedestrians sink in mud and it is a struggle to walk on the streets. Old Russian cars and new Uzbek ones also mostly sink in mud. What is also to observe in the sparsely vegetated Qizil-Qum is salt clusters. If it is not summer it can be deceiving that there is a light snow coat on the desert.

Water scarcity is a general problem in Uzbekistan but worst in the western regions of the country like in Khorezm and Karakalpakistan, which are the

[8] Saxaul is widespread in the desert and semi-desert zones of Central Asia from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan until Mongolia. Saxaul is a multifunctional plant for the eco system useful for the stabilisation of eroded ground, reducing the risk of sand and salt dust storm, and the regulation of the water balance. http://www.succow-stiftung.de/turkmenistan-saxaul.70.html (accessed: 03.01.2011).

regions furthest downstream in the Amu Darya Basin. Population growth, increase in cotton production and inefficiency of water management are some of the reasons for this problem. The main water sources, the rivers, were used intensively already since colonial times. During the Soviet period the situation deteriorated, as in order to gain more land from the poorer regions of Uzbekistan and to increase overall cotton output, a network of new channels was created and more water needed. Land gain from the desert or former pasture areas was realized by irrigation. Expansion into the desert further upstream had direct consequences for the Zarafshan, which became a poor runnel. Besides the Zarafshan also the Amu Darya lost its flow immensely out of the same reasons. The present weak flow of the Zarafshan was already the case in the 19th century due to extensive irrigation demands and the river had lost all of its water long before it reached Bukhara (Khanikoff 1845; Olufsen 1911). The Amu-Bukhara canal was completed in the 1930s, to draw water from the Amu Darya and redirect it upland to the north-west to replenish the water supply of the oasis.

The consequences of water shortage for an agricultural country like Uzbekistan are disastrous. When we consider this problem regionally, affectedness in Bukhara was also serious. Precipitation related drought and population growth were often given as the main reasons of water scarcity by state officials. But these affect the available amount of water not as severe as argued.[9] A well-known ecological disaster, the shrinkage of the surface of Aral Sea, is not happening far from Bukhara. However, the consequences of this ecological crisis are to perceive far beyond neighbouring provinces. The ecological balance was destroyed during the Soviet Union with increasing consumption of water especially for cotton monoculture. Salinization and pollution of water with pesticides, herbicides and tribities contributed this water to the Aral Sea.

At the local level while combating desertification does not play an important role and the rural residents did not seem too concerned about it, land salinity with its visible existence was playing an important role. Bukharians had seen the poor land quality as a bad destiny in compare to Ferghana Valley but they regard themselves luckier than residents of Karakalpakistan and Khorezm who are even more directly affected. In Bukhara land salinity and

[9] See also Wegerich 2001:8. He discusses the drought in 2000 and 2001 in Central Asia and argues that the reason of water scarcity lies beyond natural causes and responsibility of water management institutions. The reason behind downstream water shortage was seen political.

the lack of sufficient water (for any purpose) was the main complaints of all people irrespectively if they work on family plots or large fields. To reduce the soil salinity all agricultural fields have to be leached as a part of preparation before starting with seeding. Without leaching, the fields would turn white and nothing would grow (Smith 1992). For this purpose fields are covered with water several times, and salt is washed out by draining off farther downstream where part of the original Zarafshan now serves to collect it.

> "It is like scratching a wound. It itches, you scratch, more you scratch, more it starts to itch. Washing out the field is also like that, in order to get rid of salt, we wash out. It does not reduce the salt, next time there's even more". (Anvar)

This problem, "secondary land salinisation is caused by human interventions such as inappropriate irrigation practices, use of salt-rich irrigation water and/or poor drainage conditions"[10]. In order to leach the salinized land a substantial amount of water is used and at that point cause-effect is intermingled in a vicious circle. Water for leaching according to estimations "makes up 20% of all water used in the fields" (Welfare Improvement Strategy of Uzbekistan 2007: 30). This problem is even more serious in Karakalpakistan where the underground water table is high. Additionally, climatic changes has led to a rise in temperatures and aridity in surrounding areas as far as four hundred kilometres away and has an significant impact on vegetation periods. Through wind scoured seabed reach in form of salt, dust and sand reaches other parts of the Central Asia (Giese 1997:294).

History and Population

The described ecology had a profound impact on the history and ethnic configuration in the oasis. Nomad-sedentary interaction, which was a significant factor in other parts of Central Asia, was less so in Bukhara. The reason was that the deserts surrounding Bukhara could not sustain large numbers of livestock. This did not allow a close interaction as occurred in other regions, except when nomads became sedentary. Those who retained a pastoral way of life had to do so at some distance from the oasis.[11] Nevertheless, ethnic

[10] see ENVASSO (Environmental Assessment of Soil for Monitoring , EU Sixth Framework Research Programme) http://www.envasso.com/ (accessed: 02.06.09)

[11] This aspect is discussed in the work of Finke (2006) in detail.

configuration in Bukhara represents the close intermingling of Turkic and Iranian speakers that continues to the present day. The intermingling of these two groups is so strong that any difference is not only almost unrecognizable but also denied by people. This peaceful coexistence of the two groups also in other regions exists but it is nowhere as close as in Bukhara. While some settled Turks adopted the Tajik language, in other areas local Iranians switched to Turkic. Local circumstances and power configurations played a significant role in that respect (Frye 1997, Finke 2006).

Although it probably existed for several centuries prior to that the city of Bukhara was first mentioned in the seventh century AD. Its name is usually explained as deriving from the Sanskrit *vihara*, meaning 'monastery' (Barthold [Frye] 1986: 1293).[12] Important for the development in Bukhara, Sogdians became the main agent of the Silk Road trade with their colonies in China. Changes of supremacies did not have significant effect on the economic and cultural life over the years. Ability of arrangement under new rulers "... had its roots in the business-mindedness of the Sogdian, whose main interest was the continued long-distance trade and the specific political structure of the Sogdian city-states (Gangler et al. 2004:18). Thus, after 560 by marriage Turks were absorbed into Sogdian society while during later periods marriage was absorbing Tajiks into the Turkic realm.

Until the Arab invasion in the second half of the seventh century Sogdia was described prosperous. It was one of the first regions in Central Asia to become thoroughly Islamized and soon developed into a well-known spiritual centre for Islam. However, acceptance by the population was not immediate. Especially in the rural areas, there were rebellions against the new rulers and their religion (Frye 1997: 14ff.). The ninth and tenth century were maybe the heydays of Bukhara. Samanid rule not only attracted famous scholars but also poets like Firdausi who wrote the *shahnama* in the New Persian language. Up to this time Arabic was in use also by Persian intellectuals and artists. The Qarakhanid invasion in 999 was seen as the end of this glorious period. Not only lost Bukhara its pre-eminent position but also this opened up the region to a more extensive encroachment by Turkic groups (Frye 1997: 138ff., Finke

[12] Frye calls this interpretation a „popular etymology" (1999:16). He prefers the explanation that the word derived from the Sogdian word fwx'r „fortunate place" (Gangler et al. 2004:18) Beside the meaning of Buddist monastery, according to a 16th century annalist of Bukhara Hafizi Tanish, Bukhara derived from „bukhar" as a Zorastrian name it means „source of knowledge" (Mankovskaya 1991:39).

2006). Bukhara remained, however, an important centre for Islamic education. The heavy destruction under the Mongols in 1220 made the situation worse. Things slightly recovered under the Timurids (1369-1500). But Samarqand as capital of Timurids overshadowed Bukhara until 1500 and the Shaybanid conquest. Now, Bukhara became the capital of an Uzbek state that would soon split, however, into three distinct khanates and emirates (cf. chapter 2.1).

Following the arrival of the Shaybanids, the population was an amalgamation of sedentary groups and former nomads. Although Iranian speakers remained in the majority, they were strongly merged with now sedentary Turkic groups into one bilingual entity by intermarriage, which was very common. Over time, Turkmens and other Turkic tribes also entered the oasis and settled on its edges or in small enclaves around the older villages. Because of the lack of good pastureland, there was no extensive influx of new Qipchaq tribes to the region accompanying Muhammad Shaybani (Golden 1992: 336). The current terms Uzbek and Tajik were hardly used at all or in a very different meaning as today. Uzbek usually referred to tribal and semi-nomadic groups, few in numbers in the immediate vicinity of the oasis. Mostly people used local terms such as Bukharalik or, within the oasis, more precisely Gijduvanlik, Vobkentlik and the like (Schoeberlein 1994).

This had an end in 1868 when the Amir of Bukhara became a vassal of the Russian tsar (Gaube et al. 2004:9). The Amir put up little resistance, and the local troops were defeated easily. While the northern regions of Samarqand and Jizzak were attached to the General Government of Turkistan, the rest of Bukhara was not formally incorporated into the Tsarist state but became its vassal (Barthold [Frye] 1986). The Amir remained in power but accepted orders from Russia. Internal affairs in the Emirate were left more or less untouched (Becker 1968). In 1887 the Central Asian railway opened in 13 km southeast of Bukhara, where a new Russian settlement established, the city of Kagan.

Bukhara integrated also later into the new Soviet state than other parts. Its formal independence continued as a People's Republic until 1924. Later, it was incorporated into the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Resistance against the new regime was less strong than in the Ferghana Valley and the reason for that can be the aforementioned late incorporation (Becker 1968). With the transfer of the capital from Samarqand to Tashkent in 1930, the latter became the centre of power. While Samarqand and the Ferghana Valley retained a sig-

nificant influence, Bukhara became a less important player within Uzbekistan (Carlisle 1986). During this period, due to the only vague differentiation between Turkic and Iranian speakers national delimitation process was not easy in Bukhara. Since the ethnic labels were not used as Russian officials expected and wanted, many people had to decide on one or the other. It was not unusual that particularly in Bukhara within the same family different ethnicities have been reported (Naby 1993). The genuine reasons behind these decisions can be political pressure or simply having no preference to offered categories.

In present, Bukhara is not only the name of the city but also the name of a *viloyat* in western-central Uzbekistan as well as the capital of that province. The *viloyat* Bukhara has a population of 1.5 million, and one fifth of it live in the capital, and comprises as subdivision eleven *tuman* and the city of Bukhara. The distance from most of the *tuman* centres to the *viloyat* capital is from 10 to 20 kilometres. Including most of the surrounding desert territories, it had become the largest province of Uzbekistan during Soviet times. Today, the province territory is 40.32 thousand sq. km. According to official statistics 70% of the population live in the countryside. Agriculture makes up 12% of the gross regional product.[13] Some light industry based on textile and silk, astrakhan lambskin and food also exists.

Although official statistics count more than seventy per cent of the provincial population as Uzbek, Bukhara is, in linguistic or ethnic terms, often depicted for its Tajikness. Outside the region it is common to hear that everyone originating from there is a Tajik. Official statistics in regard to number of Tajiks and the used, preferred, learned language does not overlap. In the statistics, people can declare themselves as Uzbeks (political reasons, practical reasons) but speak and perceive themselves as Tajiks. Russians and Kazaks are the next largest groups, while the number of Tajiks is given as merely 3.1 per cent of the population (Aman 2000). In contrast, Foltz claims that ninety per cent of the population in Bukhara city to be Tajiks (1996: 213). In the city, as well as in some rural settlements, Tajik is the dominant language. According to Finke (2006), the total number of Tajik speakers may at least be half of the population of the *viloyat*. Estimations of local historians and ethnographers even run as high as sixty to seventy per cent.

Besides that there are also smaller minorities of Turkic-speaking groups

[13]Governmental Portal of the republic of Uzbekistan. http://www.gov.uz/en/regional_authorities/1314, accessed: 16.11.10

(Turkmens, Meskhetianian Turks and Tatars) as well as Ukrainians, Armenians, Chechens, Koreans, Bukharian Jews.[14] These groups are rather urban except for the Turkmens who are predominantly rural. The southern *tuman* towards the border to Turkmenistan – Karakul and Olot and the eastern Karaul-Bozor – are predominantly Uzbek and Turkmen. Local intellectuals with Turkmen background believed that similar to the Tajik case the Turkmen population is in fact much higher than in official statistics. Out of same reasons as the other minorities have done, many people register themselves as Uzbeks. Turkmens to whom I talked in the vicinity of my field setting did not mention any intention to emigrate to Turkmenistan and had no link by kinship. They argued that they are called as Turkmens but since they live here for a long time, they are almost Uzbeks. Some sound differences in their Uzbek for their own perception did not make themselves Turkmens, although called as such.

The District of Romitan

The *tuman* of Romitan, the main field site within the oasis, is located in the north-west of the *viloyat* including a major portion of the Bukharian Qizil-Qum. The population is concentrated in the east, while most of the western parts are only seasonally used as pasture lands. It is proudly claimed by local historians that the town predates that of Bukhara city by centuries (Halidov and Kobilov 1997). The *tuman* has also from the oasis separated one township, Gazli, and a village, Qizil-Ravot, both deep in the Qizil Qum. The rural population of the *tuman* is organized in seven municipalities. Each of them contains between ten to twenty villages and has an average population of about fifteen thousand. The towns of Gazli and Romitan are each subdivided into neighbourhoods (*mahalla*) but in contrast to the *mahalla* discourse in Uzbekistan in the rural areas neither in administrative nor in daily usage people did not mentioned it at all (Massicard and Trevisani 2000; Sievers 2002).

Uzbeks and Tajiks are the largest groups in numbers. In 1989, out of 78,627 individuals 62,361 were officially registered as Uzbeks and 6,611 as Tajiks but again the number of speakers is much higher for the latter. The largest minorities are Turkmens, Arabs and Kazaks, while the few Russian,

[14] Many Russians and Ukrainians but also Bukharian Jews have emigrated in recent years. The emigration of a Jewish doctor was told to me with a deep sorrow, since he was a very good, respected doctor and his place remained empty.

Tatar and Ironi families live mainly in the *tuman* centre. Most Kazaks live outside the oasis territory in the Qizil Qum. Uzbeks and Tajiks called the settlements in that region as the 'desert zone' (*chul zonasi*), where one would not settle voluntarily. The architecture in these settlements where Kazaks and Russians live is also different than in oasis with block like houses and open gardens.

The research site proper was the municipality (*selsoviet*)[15] of Chilongu within Romitan *tumani*, which consists of three former kolkhozes. Two of them were specialized on cotton production, a small third one on honey. This one was not only located apart from the two other but also as a not cotton producer did not play a significant role both for the villagers and the local officials. The names of the kolkhozes were not unusual. In Soviet times they were called Marx and Engels. After independence Engels was renamed after a national intellectual Fayzi Kurbanov. Fieldwork was concentrated on the former kolkhoz Karl Marx, now called Chilongu. It formerly had consisted of seventeen brigades, usually identified with a single village. Along the major highway of Uzbekistan from Tashkent via Samarqand and Bukhara to Khorezm and Karakalpakistan are also two villages separated from the other villages. These are the aforementioned villages with Turkmen background named Chandir One and Two.

As a result of population growth villages had grown towards each other and appeared to be one village since physical boundaries for an outsider like me have become undetectable. Irrigation canals are the markers of the borders between the villages. The knowledge of the local residents on their settlements was limited. "We live here for a long time, my parents, my grandparents have also lived here. I have no idea, where the name of the village comes from". This fertile oasis lands had already been extensively farmed.

The ethnic relations and composition of the region is described in detail by Finke (2006) and has been mentioned in past paragraphs. A Tajik-Uzbek majority is the common form, with individual villages inhabited by Arabs, Turkmens and others. One *selsoviet* in Romitan, Kurgon, is almost exclusively Tajik and the only *selsoviet* within Romitan *tumani* with a Tajik school. Sometimes, within a *selsoviet*, one half is Tajik and another Uzbek, such as

[15] The official Uzbek term for municipality is *kishlok fukarolar yigini* ("the council of the village citizens") but people almost always referred to the Russian - or indeed Soviet - term *selsoviet*, the abbreviation of Selskiy Soviet ("village council").

in Shurcha and Hazarbog. Sometimes villages can be described as Tajik or Uzbek, sometimes they were mixed. In other cases, two neighbouring villages with distinct linguistic background were united and share one school like in the case of Pinjon (a Tajik) and Kukishtuvan (a Turkmen village). In Chilongu, Uzbeks and Tajiks also form the majority within *selsoviet* and dominate all the villages in the centre.

Besides the "remoteness" of the settlements the insufficiency of the infrastructure is a major reason for complaining. In the old part of the village aside from the main street the roads are not paved anymore. The main street is also a potholed road and some asphalt rest just can be seen in the middle of the road. Side roads sink in mud especially during spring and autumn, other times dust covers the landscape. The regular bus connection to the *tuman* or to the city has remarkably declined and car traffic is noticeable less than in Ferghana. Although urban centres are also affected and experience this type of changes, shortage of infrastructure is more remarkable and drastic in the countryside. Access to the services, which used to have only symbolic prices or were free of charge, was taken for granted in the past. That is not the case anymore. Because of the transport costs a visit to *tuman* for many families nowadays is a luxury.

In other parts of Bukhara *viloyat* there were villages with Tajik schools but even in Tajik dominated regions people were worried for the future of the language. To use learning materials from Tajikistan is not allowed anymore. They are no new materials and not enough for the number of the students and their corresponding needs. Finishing a Tajik school according to families does not open the doors for better job chances while university entrance exams requires Uzbek proficiency at all. For the other minority groups, including Russians or Russian-speaking minorities like Koreans or Armenians, command in Uzbek is becoming more important. Like Tajiks or Russians who do not master bilingualism, they scratch along but have no chance to make occupational career, apart from that there are other things to be needed.

2.3 The Ferghana Valley

Ecology

The second field site was located in the southern part of Andijon *viloyat* in the Ferghana Valley. Since the early days of Soviet rule the valley is divided among three republics, namely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. From a historical point it has gained less attention and it has seldom been an important actor in the history of Central Asia. Architectural reminders from the past has not get as much as attention like Bukhara or Samarqand but it is one of the most fertile regions in Central Asia, and within the Soviet Union was the most densely populated part.

The geographic characteristics of the valley, however, are reason why it is often referred to as the "pearl of Central Asia" (Thurman 1999:10). The valley is a almond shaped large hollow that extends up to 300 kilometres east to west and up to 120 kilometres north to south, with a total surface of approximately 23,000 square kilometres (Barthold [Spuler] 1991; UNEP 1999, Thurman 1999). The landscape is mainly flat, with an altitude of 300–400 metres above sea level. In contrast to Bukhara, mountains surround the valley on all sides, the Turkistan and Alai ranges in the south and the Kuramin and Chatkal in the north. Plains and steppes occupy the heart of the valley (Bichsel 2009:15). After 1991, with the independence of the neighbouring republics, accessibility of the valley became more difficult since passing through Tajikistan territory is not possible anymore. This forced to find another solution in order to make the connection between Tashkent and the western part of the country so that a road with a mountain pass and the Kamchik-tunnel opened but in winter the destination is not an easy drive at all and often closed after heavy snowfall.

As Bukhara, the valley has a continental climate with hot summers and cold winters. Although there is some summer rainfall, overall precipitation is low and the aridity of the climate necessitates irrigation for agriculture.[16]Fortunately the valley is richly provided with water by glaciers and snow-runoffs collected by the Syr Darya and its tributaries. This contrasts the valley with many other parts of Uzbekistan (Bichsel 2009:16). People in other parts of Uzbekistan also often mentioned this peculiarity with enviousness. The proximity of

[16] In July average temperature is $27.3\,^{\circ}C$ and in January is $-3\,^{\circ}$C. Average precipitation is 200-250mm. http://www.andijan.uz/UZB/uzbobl.shtml (accessed: 09.01.11) Андижанский областной хокимият

the water sources protects the valley from significant shortage and also implies less ecological problems caused by salinization and desertification (Makhmudovich 2005). The soil is considered very fertile, again envied by Bukharians, and agrarian plans are regularly fulfiled and proudly broadcasted for the whole republic. For cultivation unsuitable land in the centre has been opened up in the last years as compensation for building sites in order to satisfy the demand of a growing population.

The problems here are therefore not about water, but about the scarcity of land and the intensive use of fertilizers and pesticides during socialist times that contributed greatly to the exhaustion of the soil and a subsequent decrease of yields (Thurman 1999). The major settlements are located at the foot of the mountains, where agriculture was traditionally conducted. Further up in the mountains, nomads and sedentary agriculturalists have long used pastures for grazing livestock. The conditions for livestock rearing are much better than in Bukhara. The grazing lands in the surrounding mountains provide sufficient pastures for large herds of mixed species (including yaks). These lands have become inaccessible since the closing of the border with Kyrgyzstan. Even more important than the surrounding mountains for the history of the Ferghana Valley has in fact been the semi-desert at its centre. This enabled nomadic conquerors to settle and graze their herds in the neighbourhood of their sedentary subjects. At the same time, they formed a military reservoir for the Khanate in Qoqand thus (Finke 2006).

While in ecological terms, the Ferghana Valley seems in a much better position that other parts of the country, there are also salt crusts on the soil along the fields. But it is remarkably less than in Bukhara. People in other provinces believe that working the land in the valley is much less labour intensive because the soil quality is significantly better and water is abundant. Everywhere else, people asked in detail about land, water, food and the "civilisation of people" (*madaniyat*), all subjects where the valley was believed to be better than. But it was always interpreted as a consequence of ecological conditions.

> "Do you see how difficult it is for us? How hard working we are with this lack of water and bad soil. Since many years water becomes an ever more important problem both as quantity and quality. Look, how easy it is for people in the valley." (Axmat)

History and Population in the Ferghana Valley

Since nomads and sedentaries lived closely together at earlier times this had a profound impact on the ethnic composition of the valley. Due to intensive interaction and close neighbourhood, nomadic tribes were able to settle down in larger groups and gradually assimilate with the local population, and this has shaped the contemporary ethnic composition (Finke 2006).

Similar to Bukhara, in the Ferghana Valley Sogdians settled and made up the majority population. At least since the sixth century BC Iranian languages were spoken throughout most of the valley. With the expansion of the western Türk Qaghanate during the sixth century here Turkification began even more intensively than in Bukhara due to closeness to the Qaghanate's centres of power in Semirech'e and Jungharia (Barthold [Spuler] 1991). The predominantly Iranian population largely assimilated within the Turkification process. Immediate succession of Turkic groups and interrelation with them formed the valley's population (Golden 1992). With the Arab invasion during the eighth century, the Islamization of the local population began. Islam affected primarily the sedentary Iranians, although revolts were not unusual during the early period (Barthold [Spuler] 1991). With the mass acceptance of the new faith by the Qarakhanids during the tenth century the conversion of the Turkic groups in the region took place (Barthold [Spuler] 1991; Golden 1992: 222; Paul 2002). Also many of the former Soghdian speakers switched directly to Turkic. One reason for that unchallenged status of Qarakhanids was their military dominance and their legitimacy through the new religion but also the closeness of the region to other areas with a strong Turkic element, such as Semirech'e and the Tarim Basin, which was not the case in Bukhara (Golden 1992: 193, Finke 2006).

The Mongol period was as devastating for people in the valley as it was for most other parts of Central Asia. During most of the following Timurid period there was a quasi-independence of some of the smaller fiefdoms in the Ferghana Valley. Andijon was one of them and Babur, its ruler by that time, one of the most outstanding personalities among the later Timurids in Central Asia. In 1500, he was defeated by the Uzbek Khan Muhammad Shaybani in battle and fled to Kabul and later to India where he founded the Moghul dynasty. He describes Moghuls and Uzbeks as destroyer of the civilization in his important autobiography, the *Baburnama* (Babur 1996: 35) but the in-

habitants of the Ferghana Valley in general and those of Andijon *viloyat* in particular admire him and consider him one of their own. Throughout most of this period, Andijon was the political centre of the valley. It also became very Turkic in character, although there were some settlements still dominantly Iranian. Pastoralism continued to exist but many of the tribes became sedentary and mixed with the previous population, creating constantly changing configurations. This settlement of Tukis tribes was not a new phenomenon (Gubayeva 1991).

After the Uzbek Shaybanids invasion to Transoxania, the Ferghana Valley was also quickly subdued. Under their rule, it was of marginal importance, as the centre of power had switched to the Zarafshan region. Different seminomadic pastoralists came to the valley and that continued in later centuries and contributed to the emergence of new tribal units (Finke 2006). After the break-off of the Khanate of Qoqand, as it came to be called after the new capital, the new state faced many problems from the onset. Apart from ongoing tensions with Bukhara, it was divided internally, which added to the weakness of the state. In particular the opposition between tribal groups, constituting a large part of the army, and the old established sedentary population and elites proved a serious obstacle to developing a stable political entity. The majority of the population spoke eastern Turkic dialects, the basis for the future Uzbek literary language. The central steppe region was inhabited by various tribal groups, most of them of Qipchaq origin. Some of them had been there since the Shaybanid period, but others arrived from places such as Samarqand and Jizzak only after the Ming tribe had attained power. Still others came from Kashghar and the Pamirs.

Similar to Bukhara in rural areas a sedentary cultural pattern was dominant, contrasting sharply with tribal life in the steppe zone (Becker 1968). Beside sedentary Turkic speakers, Tajik settlements were scattered throughout the valley (Chvyr 1993; Bushkov 1993). The Tajik population either has been descendants of an older Iranian stratum, or came to the region as a result of several waves of migration from Samarqand, Bukhara, and other lowland oases, after the fifteenth century. But also people from relatively poor mountain regions such as Qarategin and Garm came to the valley, established their own distinct villages and only gradually mixed with other Tajik groups and the local Turkic populations (Gubayeva 1991: 59ff.; Chvyr 1993, Finke 2006). Beside Tajiks Kyrgyz were also settling on the outskirts of the valley.

From Siberia and adjacent areas of Mongolia and with the push of the western Mongolian Oyrats a group bearing the name Kyrgyz came to resettle in Semirech'e. Later they moved further south towards Ferghana and Qarategin. By the nineteenth century, these Kyrgyz had become subjects of the Khan of Qoqand (Barthold [Hazai] 1986). With the Tarim Basin to the east there was extensive contact into the nineteenth century, and a large proportion of the contemporary dwellers descend from there. Other migrants arrived from regions farther west, which had been conquered by the Tsarist Empire, and from the Emirate of Bukhara. These movements continued into the early twentieth century and contributed to the complicated ethnic mosaic of the present day (Gubayeva 1991, Finke 2006).

Russians arrived in Qoqand in 1873 and soon took control of the whole valley. Opposition and internal dissension here was stronger than in Bukhara. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries upheavals shook Russian rule, the most famous of which was the so-called Andijon rebellion (Babadzhanov 1998; Hisao 2004). In the region these events are proudly mentioned as a significant part of history, as a 'national liberation movement' (Critchlow 1991: 120f.). Before complete Russian occupation, old internal feuds in Qoqand broke out again in 1875 but this time not only the Khan but also the Russian existence was affected. For this reason, it lost its favourite place among the central Asian khanates In 1876 Qoqand was annexed to Russian Turkistan as the Ferghana Oblast and thus lost its autonomy due to a lack of domestic stability (Becker 2004:89-90). The short-lived autonomous Qoqand Republic was brutally suppressed in 1918, not only the ordinary population suffered and many people lost their lives but also executions of political and religious elites as in other parts of Central Asia happened on a large scale (Critchlow 1991: 124f.).

During the Soviet period, the valley was known for its religious activities, as it had been in Tsarist times, and for many Western experts it was seen as the nucleus of a mass movement against communist rule (Bennigsen and Broxup 1983; Bennigsen and Wimbush 1986). At the same time, the valley was home of many of the political and cultural elites. The strong economy of the region and, as mentioned before, the highly appreciated local dialect is some of the reasons. Although many members of the elite still originate from the valley and the region has significant economic resources for the country, in post independence context it is noticeable that the valley gained a new

status. The political discourse, which is often related to the security and stability of the country, is maintained and focused on Islamic fundamentalism and border security, and in that context valley is the focus region. This made its inhabitants look suspicious. I was told that especially young men do not feel comfortable in Tashkent since during regular passport controls they are asked and examined in detail (cf. chapter 6).[17]

During the national delimitation process of the 1920s and 1930s, the valley was successively divided among three administrative units. The largest part was attached to the new republic of Uzbekistan while Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan received the outer margins and much of the mountainous hinterland. The Uzbek part of the valley has three provinces, Andijon, Ferghana and Namangan. Kyrgyzstan has also three with Osh, Jalalabad and Batken, while Tajikistan has one, today called Sughd. These provinces in each state contain a large part of the population as well as of the fertile agricultural land. Although especially in Uzbekistan the valley gives the impression of being more urbanised still the rural population makes the significant part of it (cf. Bucknall 2003; Bichsel 2009). Coming from the valley and being from valley is an identity expression. Being *vodilik* (from the valley) is not only a self-ascription but also an external one. In Soviet times this also included the areas beyond the border. People in Andijon still mention their close relationship and during Soviet period their orientation was more towards the markets in Osh and Jalalabad. But the closing of the borders has severely curtailed social relations and affected identification patterns.[18]

As mentioned before, the Ferghana Valley was the most densely populated part of the Soviet Union. Today, Namangan, Ferghana and Andijon together are home to seven million people, which is almost thirty per cent of the population of Uzbekistan. These provinces are also after Tashkent the second-, third- and fourth-largest *viloyat* in the country. With a territory of 4.3 thousand sq. km and a population of 2.4 million Andijon *viloyat* has the highest population density in Uzbekistan with more than 560 people per sq. km.[19] Andijon is also after Tashkent and Samarqand the third biggest city in the country. It

[17] The Ferghana Valley has also been a major destination for field studies in post-Soviet Central Asia (Abramson 1998; Zanca 1999; Rasanayagam 2002a, 2002b; Liu 2002; Megoran 2002; Reeves 2007).

[18] With the national delimitation process, three enclaves attached to Uzbekistan were created in the Ferghana Valley. One is within the Kyrgyz territory; the other one is in Tajik. After 1991 all of these areas are difficult to reach (Reeves 2007).

[19] http://www.gov.uz/en/regional_authorities/3476 accessed: 16.11.10

is also one of the most industrialised regions of the country and recent state investments have supported this in order to provide jobs to the large youth segment considered to be potentially dangerous.

The *vodi* is widely identified as the 'most Uzbek' part of the country. The local dialect is also the basis of the literature and highly praised for that. Several Turkic groups are all summed up as Uzbek but Tajiks and Kyrgyz are kept as different category. In individual conversations people express themselves as Turk, Qipchaq or Sart but the larger category Uzbek is the starting point. This differentiation is based on a long history of co-existence and economic differentiation (as pastoralists versus agriculturalists) (cf. Zanca 1999, Finke 2006). The term Turk is used for yet another category of Uzbeks. They call themselves and also referred by others as Turks (Gubayeva (1991). The Russians are predominantly an urban population and have never settled in rural areas in the valley (Gubayeva 1991). In contrast to Bukhara the Tajik population is spread and forms no strongholds, settling in both rural and smaller urban spots. The neighbouring provinces of Osh and Jalalabad in Kyrgyzstan have both a significant urban Uzbek population. The Kyrgyz settle more towards the mountains.

Marxamat District

Within the valley, the major part of the research was conducted in the *tuman* of Marxamat. It is located in the south-west of Andijon *viloyat*i, and has borders with Ferghana *viloyat* and with Osh province of Kyrgyzstan. The *tuman* was founded in 1926 and has 137,800 inhabitants living on a territory of 319 square kilometres. In the past Marxamat was unified with other districts and in 1970 took the present form. The fact that the 1898 rebellion of Andijon under Dukchi Ishon – according to Hisao one of the most significant events in Russian Turkistan history (2007:10-11) – had Marxamat as its centre, make the residents proud of their resistance to Russians.[20] After this event the place was repopulated by European settlers and accordingly named Russkoye Selo, the 'Russian village'. It was eventually renamed Marxamat ('grace'), referring to 'the grace of the Tsar for the muzhiks [the Russian peasants]' (Hisao 2004: 46).

[20] The influence of Dukchi Ishan according to Hisao was not limited to the sedentary population but also Kyrgyz were among his followers. It may also be mentioned that Dukchi Ishan was a disciple of the Naqshbandiya order (which has its roots in Bukhara).

The city of Marxamat is the administrative centre of the *tuman*, with some 18,000 inhabitants.[21] It is located approximately 40 km south of the provincial capital of Andijon. There are five rural communities and the semi-urban settlement, the shaxarcha of Polvontosh with 5,400 inhabitants. All these administrative units together contain forty-four *mahalla*, which, in contrast to the Bukhara case, is a significant and noticeable institution also in the rural areas of the valley. Within the *selsoviet* of Shukurmergen where most of the research took place, there are two kolkhozes. Pakhtakor is made up of four villages and the second one, Mashal, includes seven villages.

Officially, Uzbeks make slightly more than fifty per cent; about thirty-eight per cent of the population are Tajiks while Kyrgyz as majority is also to find in two *mahalla*. Both groups also live in other *selsoviet* within Marxamat *tumani*. Not different than in other places in Uzbekistan, Marxamat *tuman* officials were proud of its multiethnic population and according to the *xokimiyat* more than 20 groups were living here, among them Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Tatars, Koreans, Ukrainians, Uygur, Azerbayjan and Russians. Nobody was able to count more than these names and it took a while to remember if there were any other, but the number of ethnic groups was more important than with how many people this group is represented not unsimilar to the Bukhara case. In Marxamat, however, in spite of the large number of Tajiks no school in this language operated. There was only one Russian school in the centre, and one Kyrgyz in Paxtakor out of 44 schools.

Geographical and environmental conditions allowed not only farming in the region but also livestock rearing was possible. The local Turks and Qipchaqs have been engaged in this for centuries. The Soviet period brought fundamental changes to Marxamat as well. Many villages were reorganized, united or completely removed. In the late 1930s there were many attempts to improve the performance in agriculture but also to improve the infrastructure in the densely populated region. At the heart of this mechanization and modernization was also a huge irrigation project. In 1939, the Great Ferghana Canal project was realised as a "long standing dream of Tsarist and Soviet engineers (Thurman 1999:212). Ferghana Valley with its more urban character has regular private minibuses, which operate more often than in Bukhara and regularly run along the main street connecting the villages with the centre. Different than in Bukhara where the villages were founded within the inner oasis, in

[21] http://www.andijan.uz/UZB/xokimliklar/marhamat.shtml accessed: 10.01.11

the valley most of the old settlements were scattered on the landscape. My older informants were telling me that dispersed many small hamlets were unified only after 1953. The main reason for that was to make it easier to bring development to the region like gas, electricity and water, which were available along the main street. At that time 20-30 houses were often making up one village. The merging of villages along a main street does give a somehow urban character to these settlements. Besides the main street unpaved roads and mud in winter give another picture.

Existence and dominance of *mahalla* was clearly noticeable and formalized my stay more than in Bukhara. These official administrative units are called *mahalla fukarolar yigini*, each of which employs several officials receiving salaries from the state (cf. chapter 6). This had been the case already in Soviet times but since then the *mahalla* took over other duties and its formalization has increased (Massicard and Trevisani 2000; Sievers 2002). Another peculiar issue is that the national border divided some of the settlements by running through the garden or sometimes in the middle of a street. Families were thus separated via "new "borders which did not play a role in daily life of people during the Soviet period. The village of Yukori Rovot, for example, had established a 'colony' settlement within Kyrgyzstan just a few hundred meters away. Now, sons for whom during Soviet times no space had been left within the village to build their house find themselves living on the other side of the border. In another case the graveyard of one village remained in Kyrgyzstan.

Chapter 3

Changes in Property Rights

3.1 Introduction

Rural life in Uzbekistan is a peculiar mix of continuity and change in which the actors develop their own strategies and seek solutions in these mixed structures. Independence has opened up new chances and opportunities for some people while excluding many others from access to necessary resources. Agriculture is at the core of this. Especially the cash crop cotton has been the main source of state revenue, as well as an income source for many Uzbeks. Arable land is thus the key variable in Uzbekistan's political economy and for the people who depend on it. Beside that, water is a scarce resource and Uzbek agriculture is heavily dependent on it. Water rights in this situation are of outmost importance, maybe as significant as land rights.

What occurred in neighbouring countries, especially in Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan, in relation to privatization was not the case in Uzbekistan. In the agricultural sector, distribution or flexible long term leasing of land to former kolkhoz and sovkhoz workers did not happen. Land is a taboo object in Uzbekistan; it cannot be "privatized, sold, mortgaged, given away as a gift or exchanged" (Kandiyoti 2002:10). Therefore, in the Uzbekistan context terms like privatization or de-collectivization could be misleading since kolkhoz-similar structures continue to exist under Uzbek names (Ilkhamov 1998). These changes did not introduce private landownership or an end to the planned economy.

The control of the land is thus under state monopoly but at the same time the state must allow some possibilities without actually transferring ownership

rights. In Uzbekistan land is not privatized but only personalized to a certain extent. After independence, the agricultural sector was reorganized with different decrees, laws and resolutions. Today, different forms of production units, the renamed collective farms, semi-independent farmers with leased land and household smallholders coexist, yet fulfil different purposes ranging from cash crop cotton production to private production for one's self. Ilkhamov (1998: 553-555) thus described Uzbekistan's rural economy as a "three-tiered" one (see also Kandiyoti 2002:149). People can only enjoy quasi landownership in the form of semi-private plots. While a *fermer* may register the land in his name and be responsible for it, neither the land nor the end product is actually privatized. Actually, the semi-private plots, the *dehqon* farms, are the smallest production units in agriculture but at the same time the most independent one in comparison to other forms of production. Self-sufficiency is the basic principle and household plots can be used lifelong for this purpose.

This chapter aims to explain the agricultural developments in Uzbekistan's countryside with a focus on changes in property rights regimes. These were accompanied by social transformations, which significantly reshaped the lives of people. Starting with a brief look into the socialist period, the chapter introduces the three major forms of property rights in arable land, and concluding with a look at water rights. All these carry traces of the Soviet past. Follow up economic institutions work almost as uncompromised parts of socialist plan economy. In practice, the post-Soviet Uzbek economy continues to function similarly to how it did during the Soviet period: depending on cotton export revenues with a high grade state monopoly over agricultural land and decision making processes, which are run and designed according to Tashkent's decrees. The implemented changes must be seen as a forced move in order to maintain the cash crop cotton rather than as a real intention of change on the side of the government.

3.2 Collectivisation and the Socialist Organisation of Agriculture

Stalin's collectivization program in the late 1920s lead to collectivization being implemented with full vigour. The confiscation of property combined with the insufficiency of new structures such as collective farms led to famine and the

death of huge numbers of people in some places, mainly in pastoral regions like Kazakstan (Olcott 1987).[1] For the sedentary population, collectivization was less brutal because of agriculture's importance to the economy, but it did not prevent the deportation of many wealthy peasants labelled as kulaks (Fierman 1997: 362f.).[2] Kenez sees that "[F]orcing the peasants to give up their way of life was a turning point in Soviet history" (1999: 88).

In Uzbekistan, collectivization began during the late 1920s following the 1925 land reform. During that period, large landowners had been allowed to keep a certain amount of land and the rest of it was redistributed. According to Kamp and Zanca, it often occurred that not only landless peasants got land, but also people who already had small pieces of land and this usually became the private holdings of these individual farmers (2008:13). This period is described by the authors as one, in which kulaks or boi (uz. rich man) were not always arrested and exiled. Some were allowed to live and work on their remaining land. O'Neill describes land confiscations in the 1920s, in which for instance farms of over 110 acres in the Ferghana *viloyat* were totally confiscated, and those between 20 to 110 acres were partially confiscated. According to statistics "across the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), some 580,000 acres of land were redistributed to 66,000 households, 'adversely affecting' 25,216 households. A further 13,000 households received land in 1929, by which time a total of 317,400 hectares had been redistributed" (O'Neill 2003:73).

Land dispossession of kulaks continued, however, and rather than redistributing it, new collective farms were established (Khan & Ghai 1979:38-39, Spoor 1993:9). Cotton producing regions were collectivized earlier than grain producing and livestock raising regions. Kamp and Zanca mention 20 to 30 regions in the Ferghana, Tashkent and Samarqand oblast, which experienced the first wave of collectivization (Kamp & Zanca 2008:12). By the late 1930's, grain growing regions, pastures, orchards and vineyards were under the collective system. In 1931, collectivization concerned 68.2 per cent of rural households in Uzbekistan, which was above the average of the USSR as a whole (O'Neill 2003:74). At the end of 1932, almost 80 per cent of all rural households became

[1] see also Robert Conquest's book " The Harvest of Sorrow" (2002), which provides more detailed information about this period, 1929-32.

[2] For the labour camp system under the NKVD (State security police 1934-46) see Fitzpatrick (2000). According to Bolsheviks tripartite classification kulaks were regarded as exploiters and proto-capitalists. The other categories were poor and middle peasants.

a part of the then 9,734 kolkhozes and 94 sovkhozes in Uzbekistan (Kandiyoti 2002:2). Until 1990, the kolkhoz and sovkhoz system determined the production units of the Uzbek economy. In that year, around 1,108 sovkhozes and 940 kolkhozes were operating in Uzbekistan. According to Ilkhamov (1998), in 1991 there were 971 kolkhozes and 1,137 sovkhozes in Uzbekistan.

Most of my interlocutors who were able to tell me about the past, gave the year 1932 as that of the beginning of effective collectivization in Uzbekistan. In both regions, Bukhara and Andijon, I was told that well-off families were either completely or partially deported, or shot. There were, however, amazingly few comments concerning this period. People would or could not remember any details or did not want to talk on it. For most of them it seemed like a history of which they had heard from their fathers and grandfathers and that had no relation to their own lives. It corresponds to the lack of genealogical knowledge and interest that I will elaborate on in more detail later (cf. chapter 5); the past had little relevance for the presence. Even for older people, there was not too much to recount about it besides land confiscation, famines and some deported kulaks.

In the beginning, most kolkhozes and sovkhozes were very small consisting of a few families or individual villages. However, in a short time they were placed together and some of the kolkhozes were restructured as sovkhozes. Nobody could tell me the reasoning behind the decision if a kolkhoz should remain as that or be turned into a sovkhoz. They received names such as "Marx" or "Engels", "Lenin yoli" (the way of Lenin), "Ordzhonikidze" or "Shark Yulduzu" („Star of the East"). Individual villages within the kolkhoz usually formed brigades, which were named by numbers. Although after independence kolkhozes got new names, village residents continue to use the earlier names of the kolkhozes. Instead of village names, which were traditionally in Uzbek or Tajik, people usually use kolkhoz and sovkhoz names saying, "today, there is a wedding feast in Engels" or "they have a daughter-in-law from Marx".

In the case of Chilongu, almost ten separate kolkhozes existed, each more or less equivalent to one village, during the 1930s. They were later successively amalgamated and finally united into one kolkhoz, named "Karl Marx". Similar developments affected the neighbouring villages as well. The area to the Northwest, which today forms one larger administrative unit with Chilongu, was consolidated into one large kolkhoz as well, bearing the name of Friedrich Engels. In Marxamat, one interview partner who was born in 1936 told me

that in the 30's there were eight kolkhozes. After the war, more kolkhozes were established and from the mid 50's and 60's on, they were put together, establishing a larger one also named "Karl Marx". From then on cotton cultivation also increased. Many people recalled that mechanisation started only after World War II. This was also the period when the construction of Ferghana Canal system provided water to new territories.[3]

With the creation of kolkhozes and sovkhozes, control over production and consumption was increasingly transferred to the state. The idea behind this was that the communists wanted to turn agriculture into a branch of industry, so that the peasants would cease to be property owners and become wage earners. The same happened to other forms of property. In end of 1929, there was no private ownership of tractors. The necessary technical equipment of the farms was concentrated in the MTS (Machine Tractor Station) and they supported the farms with technical equipment (Kenez 1999:97).[4] Sovkhozes were the preferred form of organization, which should contribute to the national economy with significant outputs. For this purpose, the size of land under sovkhoz cultivation increased in the USSR. While in 1953 the sovkhoz-sown area was 9.6 percent of the entire land, in 1983 it reached 53.4 percent (Kornai 1992:83).[5]

In my field sites kolkhozes were the major form of rural enterprises. Humphrey (1983) argues that the historical distinction between state farms and collective farms gradually ceased to exist while the former "emerged on the basis of the estates of large landowner" and labour paid by wages. In this case the state became the landowner. Collective farms officially worked as cooperation of many small peasant farms based on family labour. She also sees the individual farming tasks as more decisive in the lives of rural workers than whether they

[3] The Great Ferghana Canal (which brought water from the Syr Darya) was constructed in 1939 by the employment of "160,000 Uzbeks, 20,200 Tajiks, and about 1,000 supervising engineers and technicians, presumably Russians, who finished the construction of this 168-mile long canal in forty-five days" (Matley, 1999:294). Through that more land was put under cotton cultivation. In 1940, additional small canals were dug.

[4] Kornai describes the MTS role in the Soviet Union as following „. . . it rented out larges pieces of machinery (such as tractors and combine harvesters) to the cooperatives. For a long time the cooperatives did not even have the right to purchase larger machines, because ownership of them was monopolized by the state machine tractor stations. This further increased the cooperatives' dependence on the "openly" state-owned sector" (Kornai 1992:83).

[5] Humphrey for the year 1976 gives the number of the collective farms as 28,000 (except fishing collectives) and that of state farms as 18,000. She also discusses in her work the low efficiency of state farms and within time the increasing dependency from state inputs of collective farms (1983:13-15).

worked in a sovkhoz or kolkhoz, although state farms as state property were considered as superior and closer to communism. From an administrative aspect, kolkhozes were more regional than sovkhozes, which were directly linked to the Ministry of Agriculture. While state farms offered a guaranteed basic wage and other benefits for the workers, collective farm wages depended on the collective's performance (awards in case of success) (ibid: 13). Again, in practice this difference was not as clear. It was interesting that when people recounted the past there seemed to be an indifference towards whether somebody had worked in a kolkhoz or sovkhoz since there was not a significant difference in respect to life quality. The workload was the more decisive and remembered aspect and not the type of farm in which one worked.

Irrespective of the organizational form, the production in general was firmly integrated into a centrally planned economy. Plans and quotas determined the production. The necessary resources for the production, from seeds to technical equipment, were provided by the state (Kornai 1992; Humphrey 1983). This "provider" role of the state in almost every sphere of life was an aspect, which was very often mentioned as to "what was good during the Soviet period" and what is missed in the present. As a production unit it must also be considered that most of the members of the kolkhoz were the workers who were organized in brigades. The rest of the labour force consisted of accountants, engineer economists, and of course the head of the kolkhoz, the *rais*.

Expansion of agricultural production was a key concern for Soviet policy makers. In Bukhara this was achieved by simply putting more land under cotton cultivation. This was taken from surrounding desert areas in the Qizil-Qum were some Kazak and Turkmen nomads contributed to the economy through livestock products. In the 1930's and 1940's large irrigation canals were constructed. For instance, the 500-mile long Qara-Qum Canal (channelling water from the Amu Darya) brought water to the deserts of Turkmenistan and western Uzbekistan and significantly increased the cotton-cultivated area (Spoor 1993:9, 2009:141, Matley 1999:297). I will mention the ecological consequences of this in the following chapter four.

Similar in Marxamat, especially in the 70's there was a land-gaining policy, which saw the expanding of fields towards the mountain slopes and foothills (*atir*). This expansion was at the cost of the livestock as it affected the areas in which they grazed. At the same time, steppes were also connected to cultivation lands via irrigation canals as a part of land gaining program. Again,

livestock lost pastureland in the name of cotton fields. Besides the demand for cotton, population increase was another pressure factor leading to the opening of new lands or to conversion for different uses. In the Marxamat region, livestock were sent to graze towards Kyrgyzstan to the Alay-Mountains as an alternative. The conditions there satisfied the needs of livestock and the border with Kyrgyzstan at that time did not play a role as it later would.

Collective farms of all types had failures despite all investments in them. State farms were often even less efficient than collective farms since the former necessitated technical equipment and agricultural knowledge that the country did not possess at that time. In sovkhozes work motivation was less than in kolkhozes since the state paid the wages even if production targets were failed in contrast to the kolkhozes (Kenez 1999:96-97). The problem of low agricultural output was not specific to Uzbekistan but was embedded in the overall command economy and its structures. Awards, nominations and other means were not successful enough to create incentives in order to change this situation (Humphrey 1988, Khan and Ghai 1977). Other well-documented problems occurred as in all socialist systems. On the one hand, state inputs did not always arrive in total or in time and therefore production targets could not be met; related with that was the frequent complaint of a shortage of labour. At the same time, the system provided incentives for kolkhozcu as well as officials to defect. The appropriation of collective goods and hoarding was not unusual as exemplified by the mentioned cotton scandal in the 1980s (see also Kornai 1992:244, Verdery 1996:19-36).

3.3 The Founding of *Shirkat*: from Engels to Guliston

The past reforms in agriculture, which focused on land and water rights were aimed to establish socialized agriculture and production by all means. The collective farm system in the USSR remained untouched between 1948 and 1985, when the first changes occurred with *perestroika*. Without transforming the existing property forms, i.e. introduction of private property, some changes became inevitable. Farm efficiency and food production needed to be increased, so Gorbachov's reform initiative came to Uzbekistan in 1989 (Kandiyoti 2002:10; Schoeller-Schletter 2008:22).

With the demise of the Soviet Union the Uzbek government started to reform agricultural structures, mainly, as aforementioned, in concern to names, while collective or state enterprises were not actually disbanded. Sovkhozes were the first to be changed. During the 90's, they were transformed into kolkhozes and within time they took the form of other economic units such as *shirkat*, private livestock farms or rental enterprises (Ilkhamov 1998). Sovkhozes were seen as being a burden to the state budget, not only because of the wage payments of a large work force but also because of their dependence on large amounts of capital and complementary resources. As mentioned earlier, sovkhoz workers received their fix salary while kolkhoz wages were related to the earnings of the kolkhoz as production unit. The transformation and renaming of collective and state farms of the past into *shirkat*[6], *fermerler uyushmasi*[7] or *jamoat xo'jaligi*[8] helped to secure the new independence in the early years and produce acceptance of the difficulties of this period with the expectation that things will change in the future. Thus kolkhoz Engels became *shirkat Gulistan* (uz. Land of the flowers).

Ilkhamov points out that at the end of the 1990's, kolkhozes as production units kept their dominant role, with more than half of the irrigated agricultural land being under kolkhoz control. He also argues that the post-independence reforms did not really touch the kolkhozes. Their direct dependence on the government resources and control was left unchanged. The creation of tenant farmers who were tightly connected to the kolkhoz in their production process was presented as part of market economy and reforms. But the economic independence of kolkhozes did not reach beyond the marketing of fruits, vegetables and meat. Dairy products as well as cotton and wheat were taboo in that respect and were cultivated under state planning on 65 per cent of all arable land (Ilkhamov 1998:539-541). Strong state control over agriculture and land brought people to seek solutions similar to the Soviet period.

In the following part I will describe the operation of post independence

[6] Ilkhamov translates *shirkat* as cooperatives. He describes them using the following words: "In practice, the concept of *shirkat* is applied to agricultural cooperatives or collective enterprises created on the basis of one of the kolkhoz or sovkhoz divisions as they (kolkhozes and sovkhozes) were being transformed into smaller structural units. In such cases *shirkat* unite several former brigades which used to work within a certain division before the break-up" (1998:544) (emphasizes in original).

[7] Association of peasant *fermer*

[8] The term *jamoat xo'jaligi* corresponds like *shirkat* to the formal kolkhoz territory as a cultivated land unit. Trevisani uses both *shirkat* and *jamoat xo'jaligi* as „joint stock enterprise" (2008:51).

production units under their Uzbek names. These names are placed at the entrances to the provinces, districts and villages, and people have started to be welcomed with these new names: "Welcome to Gulistan *jamoat xo'jaligi*". Cotton cone carved out of gypsum consolidate this picture. When asked what the difference between *shirkat* and *jamoat xo'jaligi* or, in fact, the difference between *shirkat* and kolkhoz is, the answer was always: "the name has changed, otherwise nothing" or "there were some changes but not significant ones".

Two reasons were behind the idea of the transformation of the kolkhozes and sovkhozes to *shirkat*. One of the reasons, efficiency, was not a new problem and building smaller production units like those in the *perestroika* period aimed to overcome that. The other reason was a post independence necessity. Ilkhamov argues that after independence kolkhozes and sovkhozes were seen not as a reflection of the reality but as remnants of the Soviet past which deserved no place in the new organization of the economy. He cites Karimov with these words:

> "Both concepts (kolkhoz and sovkhoz) are remains of the Soviet epoch. And these concepts do not fit into our life of today, do not reflect our new reality, our national pride. Today there is a need to organize the economy on the basis of absolutely new beginning that is practiced in all civilized countries. I think, it will be appropriate to give names to the enterprises transformed on the shareholding basis in accordance with their essence-agricultural *shirkat* or agricultural cooperative" (1998:545).

The existence of the kolkhoz under the new name of *shirkat*, with the necessary adjustments and arrangements, started to shape the agricultural landscape after the abolition of state farms. The kolkhoz remained as a roof organization and provider, as well as a controller and issuer of procurement contracts. What was new was that new types of employment were established allowing families to work on kolkhoz land under a kolkhoz roof with kolkhoz rules. The aim was to create more incentive for the producers while at the same time giving more responsibility to them.

The conversion of agricultural cooperatives from kolkhozes and sovkhozes into *shirkat* occurred in 1998. As agricultural cooperatives, *shirkat* got land from the state and in turn were able to lease land to their members. Land use was limited to the initially indicated purpose and was excluded from privatization, sale and exchange. Depending on performance, the land size could be increased or seized. It was also possible to provide land for cooperative

members as *dehqon* or farmer household enterprises – a step which would later make up another form of agricultural production units. By contract and for a limited time, families were able to get land from the *shirkat* for their own use and without any transfer rights for a minimum of five years with the option of an extension. Families replaced brigades as producers and were tied to individual contract agreements with the *shirkat*.

For instance, in Marxamat after the wheat harvest a kolkhozcu got five *sot* land allotted to him to use for his own needs.[9] But in order to get this piece of land he or she worked during the cultivation period on *shirkat* land according to the *shirkat*'s plan. Such a person is called *pudratchi*.[10] As a work unit, a family was in charge of maximally one-hectare land.[11] I was told that this kind of internal land allocation to families started only in the early 2000s. While the whole process is administered by the *shirkat*, a main *pudratchi* makes the contract with the *shirkat*. But numbers or statistics for that were not available. As an example I was told that in one brigade in Marxamat 63 members are responsible for 50-hectares of land. One person is the main *pudratchi*, six were responsible for irrigation, one is the tractor driver, one the driver, four are reserve pool employee, who also preformed some service job like cooking or guarding the fields, and one *tabelchi*[12] who is responsible for planning and collecting the picked cotton. The others, called *pudratchi*, were responsible for a certain amount of land and in case of crop loss they too would carry the consequences. For this job the payment was not mainly in money but rather in products such as wheat or cotton oil.

In this brigade, 30 hectares was reserved for cotton and 20 for wheat. I was told that last time the cotton plan was not fulfilled but there was a surplus of wheat. This meant that, according to the agreement with the *shirkat*, the brigade could keep the surplus wheat. But, in fact the chief of the *shirkat* kept the rest of the wheat and bought cotton in order to fulfil the plan; at the end he could claim a success when confronted by his superior. According to the agreement with the *shirkat*, the salary for cotton *pudratchi* for ten months

[9] One *sot* is 100m2 (from the Russian word sto, hundred)

[10] *Podryad* is a Russian word, which means contract. Pudratchi with the Uzbek suffix –chi means contractor.

[11] Trevisani mentions about 8-10 hectares as average pudrat size for his field site Khorezm. He argues that the size depends on the family's work capacity (2008:66). I would, however, argue that overall availability of land is at least as important a factor since Ferghana Valley has a different demographic structure than in Khorezm.

[12] From Russian word tabelschik, table/schedule maker

work was 17-18,000 sum; for wheat 15-17,000 sum was paid for eight months work. Cotton is more labour intensive. Therefore the division of labour within the brigade or the distribution of people for certain tasks is different than in wheat brigades. For instance, much more people are needed for irrigation in the case of cotton.

Of course the only decisive factor in this engagement is that the *pudratchi* fulfils the plan and delivers the amount that is required by contract. The kolkhoz pays the procurement price for the plan and any surplus left after the quota has been filled can be kept and sold. *Shirkat* makes the contract with the family (a member of the household) and depending on the family's labour force and availability the land is given for pudrat. The working hours must correspond to the salary, which is usually not paid in cash but in products.

In general, while the *shirkat* accompanies the whole production process, the contractor family is expected to do their best in regards to the quality and the quantity of the product. From the family's perspective, it is indeed a fragile situation because the contract could be ended due to "bad quality" or "too little" quantity anytime. Since *pudratchi* are at the bottom of the ladder they are the first and easiest to punish. For the *shirkat*, the termination of the contract with the *pudratchi* is hardly difficult and since all local households, with the exception of teachers and doctors, are members of the *shirkat*, there is a labour force making a single household easily replaceable.

At the same time, the *xokimiyat's* power over *shirkat* is indisputable in every respect. One step down, the *shirkat rais* executes his power within the *shirkat* while having many workers who are dependent on him – not only his staff but also *pudratchi*. The *shirkat*'s accountant is also an important person who works very close with the *rais*. The *shirkat* and the *xokimiyat* are continuously in a mutual bargaining and dependency relationship.

In the view of Ilkhamov the existing system is no different than that of the Soviet period since the revenues made do not cover the expenses due to the existing structures and further existence of collective farms. According to him, although keeping kolkhozes alive was inefficient, it was seen as the only possible solution for reaching the necessary cotton and wheat output and also for absorbing a large amount of the rural labour force (1998: 543-44). It should be considered that huge amount of expenses were economized through the poor salaries of the kolkhozcu.

Shoeller-Schletter describes this type of production in an agricultural co-

operative as "planned economy by contract" since the contract obligations of the family are assigned beforehand and the purchase price of the produce is also predefined (2008:25-28). The cotton gins, as an important part of the post-production stage, stayed under state control just as the cotton export is a state affair. The machinery and technical support, which was regulated by M. T. S's (Machine Tractor Stations), remained untouched as a separate unit and continued to serve the plan fulfilment. Inputs for the fields as well as outputs from the fields were also under state control and plan. The point is that the costs of the inputs were calculated according to market prices while the output was paid far below that, which in the end was a very good deal for the government not for the producers. The difference between the cotton procurement price and the international market price is the profit of the Uzbek government, regardless if the production unit is a *shirkat* or a *fermer*.

The kolkhoz or *shirkat* of today is thus purely an economic institution. It does not exist as a 'total institution' (Humphrey 1998) anymore. The revenues from cotton are not invested at an institutional level, which would make it possible for kolkhozcu to get further benefits such as health care or vacation, as was the case in the Soviet period. People talked about the kolkhoz and kolkhoz fields in an indifferent tone and implied that they were not directly relevant for their existence. One's own plot, however, which stands for "self sufficiency" does seem to have emotional roots. The private plots and the kolkhoz fields are two pairs of shoes and the above-mentioned indifference towards the latter has increased after independence.

"Soft budget constraints" are generally described as one of the main characteristics of the socialist economy (Kornai 1992). In the year 2004, these still existed in Uzbekistan leading to debts being written off in order to avoid a potential bankruptcy of the cooperative farms – something the private farms did not need (ECSSD 2005:4-5). Besides these debts being written off, other subsidies, for example in the irrigation system, also showed continuing traces of the past, resulting in similar problems of hoarding and padding. Rather than the actual production, the input norms and output targets continued to determine the subsidies. This creates no incentive to produce more or cheaper than the government wants. On the contrary, it allows subsidies to flow to other crops (ECSSD 2005:5). In the end, the state supported this because it, and not the average citizen, profited from the existing structures.

3.4 *Fermer*: Privatising the Uzbek Way

These changes, however, did not prove to be of much help for the national economy. The Welfare Improvement Strategy of Uzbekistan (2007) admits the slow reform pace in the agricultural sector especially up until 2003. The replacement of kolkhozes with *shirkat* did not bring the expected efficiency and according to the official data "the number of loss making *shirkat* was as high as 40% of the total" (Full Strategy Paper For 2008-2010:22).

Since *perestroika*, the development of initiatives in the agricultural sector was a topic. Besides cotton and cereal-farming *shirkat*, fruit and vegetable producing ones were also affected in this process. While the state is the owner of the land, leasing became possible in different forms. An expansion of "private" access to land was one of the possible solutions to solve the efficiency problem. For instance, the restructuring of a collective farm, which allows for the "leasing" of some land and the contracting of state-grown production was seen as a possible solution to the problem. Allowing more independence in the farming sector was also seen as one of the possibilities.

In that respect, the Uzbek government introduced the option for individuals to leave collective enterprises and establish "private" farms. These leasehold farms and their registered leaser, *fermer*, were supposed to become the new rural entrepreneurs. *Fermer* lands were originally kolkhoz or later *shirkat* lands and after their restructuring and liquidation, they were given to *fermer* enterprises. The purpose of the farm is written in the farm charter: these may be animal stock, cotton and grain farming, wine or vegetables. Depending on the farm type, there are certain regulations, e.g. as to the number of animals corresponding to the size of the land (Schoeller-Schletter 2008).

Providing private access to land in the form of leasing is perhaps the largest step in the privatization process in Uzbekistan so far. Moving from the uneconomical *shirkat* to private farming was one of the government's major agricultural objectives for the years between 2003 and 2006. Thus, the change was made in order to increase the revenues from the agricultural sector by creating incentives for profit maximization. On the other hand, a reform in the control sphere and transparency of input-output levels did not accompany these changes. According to my informants, *fermer* were seen as the replacement of *shirkat* in the coming future since, ideally, *shirkat* are supposed to disappear, while *fermer* units are expected to stabilize within time. This view was

the one propagated in the official discourse of the Uzbek government in the rural parts of the country. During my research, however, many people were, for a number of reasons, not convinced, nor did they see it as a particularly attractive option.

These and other laws on land, tax, land and water use, on livestock etc. were passed since the beginning of the 1990s but only in 1998 were recognizable changes introduced through the law on the Agricultural Cooperative, the *shirkat*, the law on the *fermer* Enterprises, and the Law on *dehqon* Enterprises (Schoeller-Schetter 2008:22). The numbers and size of *fermer* holdings continuously increased throughout the years, but there were regional discrepancies within Uzbekistan. Supposed to become the nucleus for mid- to large-scale farming following western paradigms, *fermer* would typically receive between 10 and 20 hectares, although some received more. As a result of government reforms, "...as of January 1, 2007, the total number of active farms in 2006 was 189,200 against 87,500 in 2003. Private farms delivered 86,3% of raw cotton and 73% of grain and they produced more than 32% of the gross agricultural output. The average land endowment per farm is 26.2 hectares" (Welfare Improvement Strategy of Uzbekistan 2007: 28; Full Strategy Paper For 2008-2010:22).

My two field sites showed rather different facets of rural Uzbekistan in relation to land reforms or lack thereof. During my stay *fermer* and *shirkat* existed in the Bukhara *viloyat* at the same time. Yet in the coming future, *fermer* were to replace *shirkat*. Romitan *tumani* in particular was one of the first in Uzbekistan to start a radical program of handing its entire land into the hands of *fermer*. This already began in 2001 and by 2002 almost 95 percent of the former kolkhoz land within the *tuman* was redistributed. It is not clear to what degree this was a decision of the local level, which is what a *tuman* governor suggested during an interview made. Given the general attitude of the Uzbek government in this regard, however, one should expect the president to have his word in this. This pioneer role of Romitan in the establishment of *fermer* enterprises was explained by villagers as a success and as the result of an initiative by the *xokim*. The reason he was able to do such a thing was that he was simultaneously a member of the parliament in Tashkent. Either his relations to Tashkent and his position there enabled him to carry his initiative through or he was more obliged to fulfil the reforms – something I am not able to answer and which may in fact be a mixture of both.

According to information that I got from the *xokimiyat*, 605 *fermer* enterprises were established in the *tuman*. According to the village administrative council of Chilongu, there were 119 *fermer* all together, with 61 being in Chilongu proper, 49 in Fayzi Kurbanov and nine honey *fermer*.

By contrast, in Andijon *viloyat* very little "privatisation" took place during the first few years and *shirkat* were still the dominant and determining production unit. Population density was seen as one of the obstacles to privatization because it reduced the amount of land for the individual *fermer*. This argument seems to be in regard to the Andijon *viloyat* since I was informed that more *fermer* were allowed in neighbouring Ferghana *viloyat*. People hoped that in the coming years all *shirkat* land will be distributed to the *fermer*. However, this wish is clouded by the high population density, which is mentioned again and again by the *xokimiyat* as well as by villagers. For many people, alternative investments next to agriculture, such as in textiles or certain industries may solve this problem.

> "Here in Andijon, we have no *fermer*, in Quva in the Ferghana *viloyat*, everything is given to *fermer* - up to 100 hectares. People work for *fermer* and also get paid. We get nothing here. Here we have approximately ten *fermer*, and they are all influential people; there is not one kolkhozcu amongst them. Land should be distributed but if the land were to be distributed here, maybe you would be able to get three or four *sot* per head. That's nothing; in Kyrgyzstan it is 34 *sot*. On the other hand, there is no other way. If there is not enough land, then land must be gained from the desert." (Akram)

But *fermer* are still obliged through contract to cultivate and to deliver to the state according to central regulations. Land leasing in Uzbekistan does not enjoy the same freedoms as in Kazakstan or Kyrgyzstan as the *fermer* is not free to decide what to cultivate, how to cultivate, when to cultivate and to whom to sell and at which price. He or she is involved in many agreements with the state. The delivery obligations (quality and quantity) are compulsory and fixed. If these are not met, and reasons were not accepted, the person is punished or the land taken away.

As Schoeller-Schletter (2008: 31) describes, according to the "Art.14, Law on Farms", lease money is equivalent to property tax and the conditions of production are defined in the contract. As stated in the law, land is only leased and the user has no rights to it such as transfer, exchange or sublease rights. He is not even allowed to decide what he wants to grow on the land.

Since the enterprise is registered under the name of farmer, he carries the entire responsibility of his farm - from funding to produce.

The independent juridical status of *fermer* gives them the right to open their own bank account, which allows them to regulate their transactions related to their enterprise. This account is not really directly under the *fermer*'s control since he has to deal with lots of bureaucratic work. He does not have access to his account whenever he wants to and in the end the account serves a different purpose than one might expect. Within the limited possibilities in Uzbekistan this may be interpreted as freedom in that context. I was told that a successful *fermer* needs first of all a good accountant (uz & russ. *buxgalter*) as this is the person who has an overview of the financial issues. They control and pass money from one instance to the other. What also happens is that in the end more money is subtracted from the gain of the *fermer* and that his account is not really opulent to draw money from. Besides the bank account, having a *pechat* (stamp) completes his juridical status and shows his liability for his obligations under his stamp. When non-*fermer* were asked about what defines a *fermer*, they would occasionally answer in a sarcastic tone: "They have their own bank account, and they have a stamp".

Since the inputs for the fields come directly from state resources via the local authorities a *fermer* does not get money paid to his account for the seeds or fuel so he does not have deposit money that he can freely use. After harvest, depending on the success of the *fermer*, his profit is calculated, and then the expenditures are deducted from this gain and the left over sum of money paid to his account. But in reality things often work differently. This "having account at the bank" did not give the *fermer* the freedom to use this money depending on their needs and plan.

Part of these inputs is the workers. *Fermer* had to take all the members of the earlier brigade who worked that particular piece of land (but do not necessarily pay them much of a salary). The number of close kin is considered important as support for the success of *fermer*, as they count as reliable, willing and ready to work. Not only do they profit themselves from the success of their *fermer* relatives but it also allows them to be and stay part of an active kin networks that open doors in times of need, such as concerning problems with other bureaucratic levels or a bed at the hospital.

This point, "individual responsibility", was often described as a part of market economy, which was not present in the Soviet period, when everybody

or nobody in the kolkhoz was responsible for the enterprise. Moving towards individual responsibility was seen as part of a modern world in which the individual plays an important role. In the *shirkat* the liability of its members stayed within the limits of their contribution to the cooperative, whereas in *fermer* enterprises liability was clearly expanded away from collective and towards individual risk.[13] Actually, handing the responsibility of production to the individuals was seen as the key solution to old problems. Personal responsibility instead of collective accountability was one of the major shifts from the past. With the introduction of land leasing, the individual emerged as an actor who was to carry the responsibility of the whole cultivation process. This point was decisive for many people in regards to their economic and social status – they were either bold or cautious when deciding on whether to engage in *fermer* activity. Freedom of decision, on the contrary, was not mentioned as an indicator of market economy. I think it is important to note that *fermer* never used the word "private" (*shahsi*) for the leased lands, it was always referred to as "registered under my name". This expression points to the relationship between land and *fermer*. However, owners of shops or tractors did use the word *shahsi*, in order to indicate that he is the owner.

The procedure of establishing a *fermer* was described as follows: First, the candidate must make an application to his *selsoviet* and present a number of documents, his technical equipment, financial resources and available labour power as basic requirements of establishing as a *fermer*. Another part of this process is commission meetings and a series of communications among different bureaucratic levels ranging from the village administrative council to the *tuman xokimiyat*. In theory, any member or non-member of the *shirkat* can apply and this application will then also be reviewed by the *shirkat rais*. After checking the labour and technical conditions, he then forwards it to the *xokimiyat*. The commission in the *xokimiyat* then decides about the application. The commission is made out of a chief of the bank, the deputy xokim and other bureaucrats of the *xokimiyat* (land and water issues, cartography, economists, agronomists etc). If the *rais* of the *shirkat* did not agree to the application, then the applicant has the chance to go to the *xokimiyat* and negotiate his situation.

[13] Trevisani (2007) talks about "privatisation of risk" that *fermer* must face in the "privatisation" process. I would see it simply as a relocating of liability and those who engage in *fermer* businesses usually consider it in advance. I think the use of the term privatization is misguiding in the Uzbekistan agricultural context. But to be allowed to take the risk of becoming a *fermer* is maybe the biggest privilege one can have in rural Uzbekistan.

After the meetings and evaluations of the commission, it is then decided upon whether the applicant gets land and on the size of it. In Marxamat, I was told that village council is also involved. The village council provides information on the potential *fermer* candidate in relation to his work records on his own private plot. If he works efficiently then his application will be forwarded to the *xokimiyat*.

While becoming, being and staying a *fermer* is not an easy thing, losing the status is. If the contract crop is not cultivated or the land used for another purpose, this can lead to an early end of a lease contract. Farm liquidation can also happen due to other reasons that are not held in the contract but may be even more important. If becoming a *fermer* depends on the xokim, losing the land may also be his doing. Everything can be viewed as a contempt of the contract. Many *fermer* either did not get their profits on time or when they needed money from their account the bank had none to give them. Sometimes it is helpful to bribe the bank chief in order to get money from the account before other *fermer* get their money. Because of these delays and obstacles *fermer* suffered lack of cash and could not pay their kolkhozcu except in kind. There are *fermer* who have better access to their accounts and get their payments depending on their networks in the local landscape. In this sense, a good accountant, which one can trust in is essential. In Chilongu, out of 61 only 15 were able to fulfil their target. Others had to pay a penalty (cf. chapter 4).

But if the whole cultivation process is accompanied with experts such as engineers and agronomists, it is difficult to imagine that somebody can fail in the harvest process. And if only people with proven skills are eligible to become *fermer*, it is difficult to imagine that these people might fail. In reality, most people that fail do so due to bureaucratic mechanisms. If a *fermer* does not have enough resources to invest in these mechanisms, he may be able to become a *fermer*, but there is a high probability that he is doomed from the beginning. He will not get a good piece of land and soil of quality, he will not have enough water for irrigation or not get the water in time, and the tractor will probably not be available to him when he needs it.

No different than in any other part of the world, the economic well-being of people is strongly related to the location of the village. Availability of water, quality of soil and the location of the fields are some of the determinants. Some of the worst locations are in the desert zone. These are newly opened

fields, which are not properly irrigated for lack of water. *Fermer* who got some piece of land from "*chul zonasi*" ("desert zone") naturally suffer under these bad conditions. If the land was allocated in the immediate vicinity of the desert and the irrigation possibilities were limited, the obligatory minimum output was less than other *fermer* whose land was not only of better quality but also had better access to irrigation. So once again the kind of crop and amount that is to be cultivated is predetermined.

This was more often used by livestock *fermer*. In the mid 90's "large state-owned livestock complexes were privatized and broken up, the number of cattle in enterprises decreased, while the number in rural households increased sharply" (Lerman 2008: 489). In Bukhara the there were four livestock *fermer* with each about 250 animals (mainly sheep). During the Soviet time each brigade had about 1000 animals. This expansion towards the desert was manageable compared to the problems people were confronted with in Ferghana Valley. During the Soviet time, livestock was moved to the mountains in Kyrgyzstan. This option is no longer possible and livestock has started to be transported to other regions in Uzbekistan.

So, who became a *fermer*? The usual answer started as "whoever wanted", followed by remarks like "those who have the ability to work it". Allegedly, being experienced in agriculture and having enough labour force are the first necessary criteria. But these were not difficult to find in a rural area where everyone had been doing this work for many years. Moreover, every step of the planting and harvesting is determined from top down, which does not leave much space for individual skills. Still, experience in agriculture is not only held in the law on farms "(Art. 4, Law on Farms)" as a necessary criteria but is also continuously mentioned in the *xokimiyat* and by numerous people, especially at the beginning of my field work, as a decisive criteria. Interestingly enough, the minimum financial investment by the *fermer* is defined in "Art.6 and 18, Law on Farms " as "corresponding funds" which allows for a certain flexibility at a local level but also provokes the question as to what "corresponding funds" actually are. A leased piece of land, which is registered and headed by the *fermer* founder, constitutes the *fermer* enterprise (Schoeller-Schletter 2008).

Officially, anybody older than 18 with the capabilities to manage leased land can be a *fermer*. In practice, the land allotment is in the hands of the local authorities from the beginning to the end (see also Ilkhamov 1998, Trevisani 2009). People previously in key positions, or their children, are often awarded

with the scarce resource of land. The procedure of getting land is attached to numerous difficulties, bureaucratic work and corruption, the latter often being mentioned as the rule and not the exception.

> "At the beginning we were told that anyone who could manage could be a *fermer*. We thought that meant those who know about agriculture, techniques, and cotton, and those who have an idea of administrative work. But what they actually meant with 'manage' was who could fill out all the paper work and has the material and moral power to do that." (Shukrat)

In the end, it is the *xokim* who decides who is to be given a leasing contract. He also controls the agricultural, bureaucratic and marketing processes in order to meet the quotes and deliver them to the higher levels. In fact, this is the most important criterion for the local government in order for them to keep their jobs. For this purpose, the aim is to fulfil the plan and to get as much cotton as possible. The role of the xokim is more visible in this type of production since the registration and also signing of the leasing contract is done under his supervision. Leasing periods are, under his initiative, at least 30 to 50 years (cf. also Schoeller-Schletter 2008:30-31).

One day, I witnessed a man coming to the house of an acquaintance of mine who had a high position at the *xokimiyat*. This man asked the friend if he had made an appointment with xokim. The appointment was made and the friend asked, if he should join them during their meeting. The *fermer* candidate had an interest in his friend being there. While the candidate would answer all the questions, whether he has a tractor, what kind of tractor, enough labour power, and the answers to those questions would not be enough. The acquaintance with somebody working in the *xokimiyat*, with knowledge of "how things work", was seen as decisive.

Many people who were not *fermer* told me about the difficulties of being a *fermer* and regarded the entire issue as simply not worth it as it is quite risky business. So, if it is so risky, then why do people decide to become a *fermer*? People with agricultural experience like agronomists and agricultural engineers – very often also the background of kolkhoz chiefs – have a good chance to get into the *fermer* business and also be successful due to their experience during the Soviet period. But they not only have professional experience and schooling but also the necessary networks in the bureaucratic cadres. Getting good and quick information in time, in other words having low transaction

costs, not only helps to get into the new system but also to get a good piece of land. According to Kandiyoti (2002), in Uzbekistan former cadre personnel constituted 62 percent of the new farmers.

It was also not unusual for many *shirkat* chiefs' or *fermer* to have previously been accountants. It is a vicious circle; usually only people in certain networks and with certain relationships can become *fermer* and only being a *fermer* can open other doors and business possibilities. Of course for a few people, it carries more economic advantages than for others. Being a member of a known, recognized family or a friend of the *xokim* is not always enough to breast possible difficulties. Having a large family is not only necessary so as to have a large labour force, but also so as to be ready for any possible difficulties. Being *fermer* is like playing in another league, which necessitates specific skills. According to many non-*fermer*, those who received land were all people with money and social networks from the past. Clearly, many *fermer* got their chance due to kin relations or other close connections. Otherwise, one cannot be a *fermer* and cannot get credit. It is not something that one can manage with one's own resources. A retired kolkhoz economist remembers the first days of *fermer* applications:

> "At that time, when the first *fermer* appeared, if 15 people applied to be *fermer*, only one was able to do it. Only one person could actually manage to run from one place to another, to pay the numerous fees, as well as the bribes." (Farshod)

I therefore decided to ask people if they would consider themselves good *fermer* candidates. All of them had the necessary knowhow, labour force and some links to the *xokimiyat*. The answer I got, tended in most cases to be something like: "We do not want to get a headache. What we have is enough for our needs. Maybe you get more money being a *fermer*, but that is not without its price. At the end, if things do not work out as planned, you lose everything you invested as well as your position towards the *xokimiyat*." That is why Daniyar did not try to be a *fermer*. He does not have enough family to serve as a labour force. Therefore he instead invests more intensively in his private plots and kitchen garden where he established his own green house (*teblitza*), in which he grew tomatoes out of season and sold them accordingly for a higher price.

In this aspect I find it useful to distinguish. There are *fermer* who are welcome as such and accepted as part of the system, either due to their family

background, their networks or their financial potential. There is another category of *fermer* who are also in this business, but it is clear that they cannot survive under the present conditions and that they do not belong to the main core. However, they too get a piece of the pie, even though it may be tiny and dry. Many factors determine the destiny of the *fermer*, but their proximity to the *xokimiyat* is the decisive criterion. All key issues; the location of the fields, the kind of agreement and the infrastructural support depend on this contact. Being a *fermer* is thus a privileged category in comparison to those who are not. But within the *fermer* there is a further hierarchy according to their proximity to the *xokimiyat*. This relation is very important in order to get a large and good piece of land. And the quality of land is determined primarily by the availability of irrigation water, especially in a region like Bukhara.

For the future, becoming a *fermer* is seen as the only possible way to gain access to the little remaining land left. In a few years, anybody wishing to become a *fermer* will not have a chance anymore, as there will be no more land left. If the *xokim* is, according to the president's declaration, ready to give land to *fermer*, then one should act and take it now. It satisfies a small percentage of the population and that is all. There are no new *fermer* in places like Romitan at the moment. The only alternative is an expansion towards the desert. This may solve the land problem, but bringing water, which is already scarce in the oasis, is another story. The chief official told me that people seeking to become *fermer* should wait, as there is not enough land. I then asked him how long that should be. He responded that it depends as some people may quit or have their land taken away from them. This however, would happen only after three years if the *fermer* were not able to reach the minimum production amount. "This year seven to eight *fermer* will have their land taken away from them."

3.5 Different Types of Private Plots

Ordinary people have three options for access to land. Two of those are officially registered private plots: small gardens in the yard and additional fields outside of the village. In Bukhara and the valley the former are directly attached to homes in the form of a courtyard. This is in fact the land plot on which the house is built and the remaining land then turned into a plot. This land is primarily used for basic consumption products like tomatoes, spinach,

potatoes, onions and the like. Depending on the place and how the houses are built there can be some place left for a cow and some chickens. Since kitchen gardens are directly located in the courtyard, it serves the immediate, daily needs of the family. Also a vineyard in the garden not only provides a nice shadow for the hot summer days but also grapes. A few trees somewhere in the courtyard, such as an apricot tree, complete this picture. These plots can be inherited from father to son, and can be seen as private property, although the land ultimately belongs to the state.

Actually, this land allocation existed already in Soviet times. Private plots were not touched during the socialist period and were not put under cotton cultivation. Since that time they played a key role of "relief valve" for the people and still is today. Providing an essential part of the diet, the products of the private plots were also easy to sell in kolkhoz markets with immediate returns (Bacon 1966; Kitching 1998).

> "In socializing fully all land holdings, the land immediately adjoining the houses (vegetable gardens, orchards, etc.) shall remain for individual use, while at the same time, where necessary and on the decision of the management committee, confirmed by the general meeting, the size of the garden can be altered" (Stalin 1931, cited in Rowe, 2009:693).

The second type of land is the *tomorqa*, the 'land behind the building', which has also been given since Soviet times as a private subsidiary plot. It can be located in the direct vicinity of the house or, more often, on the outskirts of the village. Starting from late 1988, access and size to *tomorqa* increased. This process continued after independence as the average plot size per family in Uzbekistan increased from 0.12 to 0.19 hectares in order to secure self-sufficiency. After a decree by Karimov, by law all villagers are allowed to get up to 25 *sot*. Officially, the government declared that every household should receive a certain amount of land in order to make a living from it. The additional pieces of land got the name "koshumca *tomorqa*" or "presidentski land" (see Trevisani 2008:61). *Tomorqa* also provides some freedom as people perceive it as their land and have the choice to do what they want with it.

Finally, workers of the *shirkat* or of a *fermer* may get a piece of land after the first harvest in a semi-legal way. This is like an underground tunnel to the fields, which allows people to cultivate a piece of land. As mentioned, in the Ferghana Valley, *shirkat* land was, similar to the kolkhoz period, divided into brigades, which were responsible for a certain amount of land, which they

are allowed to use for themselves after the harvest. In Bukhara instead of the *shirkat*, *fermer* were in charge of growing centrally determined agricultural crops and in a similar way kolkhozcu have some access to land after harvest as complementary. This is basically their payment for the workload throughout the year as they otherwise hardly receive any regular salary. There can be an agreement with the *shirkat* that kolkhozcu are allowed to use the land after harvest as a part of their work agreement. Since people must survive and in order to do so have to have access to a piece of land this is condoned. But this puts the kolkhozcu in a fragile situation in which *shirkat* and *fermer* are able to exert pressure on them, either in the form of extra work on the fields or delivering part of the cultivated produce. The stress of losing access to the land is enough to control the kolkhozcu. *Shirkat* or *fermer* land can be given in this fashion, as both enterprises are often not able to pay their workers in money. It is both a form of payment and also offers a possibility of self-sufficiency.

In Marxamat, a kolkhozcu can get five *sot* of land from the *shirkat* and use it until the next cultivation. I was told that if somebody wants more land and it is available, one might rent it in addition. Renting land to kolkhozcu, of course, is not welcomed by the *xokimiyat*. Every cultivation necessitates an extra amount of water, so that mainly the lands, which are a little bit out of sight and less easy to control, were used for this purpose. But again this is a "known secret" and is tolerated since poor and irregularly paid kolkhozcu should get some access to land for food security. After the wheat harvest the land is divided between the kolkhozcu and they are able to cultivate what they want within a limited time. The land has no fallow period but wheat and cotton fields are used interchangeably, which allows a gap of a few months at which point it is used by kolkhozcu. Most of them prefer to cultivate potatoes and cabbage.

Thus today, a kolkhozcu, a person who settles all cultivation burdens, does this in order to get access to the fields after or between the harvest periods. Most of the people working on kolkhoz or sovkhoz lands did not become a *fermer* but became unemployed and attempt to survive by investing in their household plots as *dehqon*. This is not considered an agricultural business. People either referred to themselves simply as *dehqon*, or by paraphrasing it and saying, "we have some land that we cultivate". But for *fermer* it was clear that he calls himself as *fermer* and also that others talk about him as such.

The private plots are free from the state contract system. Farm products

can be sold or consumed privately. The head of the family gets the land for life and after his death, depending on the situation of the land in the region; it may be passed to children for their use. Labour force is provided by the family. This land is not allowed to be kept uncultivated and there is no fallow time allowed. The *dehqon* is responsible for all issues related to his land. If he does not pay the tax and does not start with the cultivation within a year of allocation he can lose the land. As mentioned, a transmission of land to the next generation is possible but depends on local circumstances, such as land scarcity or the position of the *xokimiyat*, or how much land the family already inherited from other sources. The land is provided by the *shirkat* and it is registered under an individual name. A *dehqon* farm is thus also a registered legal entity. While the *shirkat* provides the land, any person who was employed in a rural area can ask for registration. The *xokimiyat* decides and registers the land. This new arrangement brought new roles and.

Getting land is one part of the problem but to build on it is another challenge for a kolkhozcu family. The land of the first type, the courtyard, is given after marriage and many people do that in order to secure their land and be able to begin to cultivate crops on it. Because of the land scarcity, it is allocated only after official registration, leaving only a short time to construct a house on it before the marriage. The only way to bypass this and have at least a semi-constructed house before the wedding was to actually marry before and celebrate the wedding later. A couple can officially get married, passing the *zags* as it is called[14], earlier than planned and directly after that apply for the land. But the wedding feast can be postponed until the house construction is at least partially completed. During that time the couple can stay either patrilocal or separately each with one's parents. When the main components of the house are built, the couple moves in. I visited several couples who had moved into their newly built homes when they were only partly completed. Often, one room was roughly finished, with toilette and cooking facilities. The remaining construction work of the other rooms will be completed when enough construction material, time and money is available.

In practice, the amount of land allocated to newly founded families inside and outside the village has continually decreased in recent years (Ilkhamov 1998). Sizes of farms are limited, they are not allowed to be larger than 0,35

[14] *zags* is the 'department for the registration of civil status' and is used as an abbreviation for officially registered marriages.

ha on irrigated land, 0,5 ha on non-irrigated land or one ha in the steppe. Juridical regulations on *dehqon* farms started in 1998 and were then amended as "Law on *Dehqon*" in 2005 (Schoeller-Schletter 2008:29).[15] The information about land distribution in Bukhara was controversial. There were families, which got 25 *sot*, as promised by the president, but some only got 20 or even 15. Even in order to get it, people had to repeatedly ask and bring gifts.

Some are luckier. Botir has 60 *sot tomorqa* in total. Since he lives with his parents he also cultivates their plot together with his own. His own plot is 25 *sot*, his father also has 25 *sot*. In addition, his mother also got ten *sot* from the kolkhoz during Soviet time. How she got this ten *sot* was not really clear to me. She claimed to have simply asked the kolkhoz and since she was a teacher with a president's degree at the time, she got more. At that time, it was not so difficult to get land. As long as his parents are alive Botir can keep these 60 *sot*, but after that he is not too sure, if he can keep their part as well. His youngest son will get his piece of land and the house without a problem, he was quite sure about that. In that respect he just needs to worry about his older son, who will not inherit Botir's house and needs to build his own. This problem was already solved in Botir's case since the old house of his parents will be destroyed and this land was planned to use for his older son who will live in a separate house.

In the Ferghana Valley people have to be satisfied with much smaller pieces of land. According to my information people got approximately eight to ten *sot* in the early 1990s and within time it became less and people got only six *sot*. Towards the *tuman* centre the land size was even smaller and it was around four *sot*. Of these, two or three *sot* are used for the house to build. Thus, agricultural land and building land are also scarce resources in competition with each other.

Since land is a scarce good there are not many options to accessing land besides the ones already mentioned. Land without water does not have a value for agriculture but at least in a limited way it can be used for livestock breeding. Not only do plan and produce manipulations exist but there are also hidden agreements on the land size and usufruct rights among local officials, *fermer* and others. The remoter the new land, the poorer the soil quality is,

[15] Ilkhamov points out how in the Soviet period, the size of the personal plot was not more than 0.1 ha in rural areas. After independence he places the size of irrigated land at up to 0.25 ha. (1998:551). See also Kandiyoti (1999).

especially in Bukhara since the expansion is towards the desert. For a small kitchen garden the availability of water is an important factor. In the Ferghana Valley, an expansion towards Kyrgyzstan used to be possible but is no longer since independence.

But even those who got land said it was a struggle. They were also aware that the land was taken from kolkhoz land which is becoming smaller and smaller. I was told that in Chilongu per year approximately 50 new households need land for their settlements and *tomorqa*. The problem for kolkhozes is that if they give land, they will not be able to fulfil the plan. Kolkhozes let people wait and give the land as late as possible, forcing them to share land with their family and thus keeping many generations together on a limited space, which they use for housing, kitchen plots and *tomorqa*.

Families that were not engaged in any work with the kolkhoz suffered from this problem much more as the kolkhoz tended to be more conservative when giving land to them. However, families with good connections to the *xokimiyat* are able to solve this problem through their networks and exchange relations. For example, I witnessed how a brother of a village cadre in Marxamat got land with the help of his brother. Not only did this person have good relations to the *xokim*, his skills as a recognized medical person were also of great importance. In that respect, kolkhoz heads profited considerably, as did other officials, from this non-privatisation, land monopoly and scarcity. It was no different to the *fermer* case. While officially land is rewarded to those who are able to work and manage it, networks, kin and friendships actually lead to land.

One problem is that families with many sons have a difficulty to get land. The youngest will stay with the parents and inherit their piece of land. But the older brothers need ground on which they can build their own houses and settle down. In the villages the ground is limited and expansion towards the outskirts of the village is already happening. One family with several sons and poor networks also shared this experience:

"After official registration of the marriage, we asked for land for my son. There is a commission in kolkhoz and they told us: Your father has 30 *sot*. It must be enough for you, divide it among your sons". (Timur)

3.6 Access to Water

Water was always of key relevance for the agricultural oases in Central Asia. Olufsen describes the importance of water for Bukhara from his journeys to the region in 1896-97 and 1898-99 with the following words:

> "The old saying that the weather is the real farmer, is not relevant in Bokhara; here all cultivation is attained by irrigating the yellow or yellowish grey loess, and if this is done well, the well known sentence of Mohammed: 'plant a stick in the yellow earth, water it, and next year you will have a tree,' may be said to hold good for Bokhara too. ... (one) only has to keep the canals in order, so that he can lead so much water to each kind of plants as the latter require" (1911:486).

Before Olufsen's trip, Schuyler mentioned the high dependency of the region on the water. "The worth of land is estimated chiefly by the amount of water to which it has a right, and most of the lawsuits about lands arise out of disputes concerning water" (2004 [1876]:286).

Distribution of water had to be organized collectively at the village level and administratively on a higher level in the Emirate. Because villages were in competition with each other concerning the amount of water they could re-distribute internally the final decisions were taken by the Bukharian Government. A central authority, the *mirab*,[16] had to establish quotas according to which villages were allowed to take water from the canal and his subordinate officials took care of the dams (cf. 288-89). These would be followed by similar quotas on lower levels. Within the village, a junior *mirab* was responsible for overlooking the internal distribution. He had to establish time and duration for individual fields to be watered.

Parallel to the overall developments, a law was passed in 1924 on water monopoly – a time in which the revolution on the countryside seemed to be intensifying. Since 1922 water had been state property, although this was actually the case even before. But now it could be used for the objective of implementing socialism. "With the village-level "water authorities" – the *aqsaqal* and *mirab* – now subject to official approval, the government gained a direct hand in village affairs for the first time. Using the threat of withholding water supplies as a sanction, they were able to force compliance through what was becoming a "command" agricultural policy."(O'Neill 2003: 72)

[16] In Tajik and Uzbek it is the same word. Literally, it means „water master" or „water prince" (Olufsen 1911:491) or „water ruler" (Schuyler [1876] 2004:289).

Irrigated agriculture and crops like cotton and rice with huge water demands permanently increased the dependency on this scare resource. To develop cotton production a further increase in the amount of irrigated land was planned, which caused a greater demand for water. One of the consequences was the shrinking of the Aral Sea. According to Wegerich, two explanations can help to understand the reasons behind the Aral Sea catastrophe. One is the "incorrect development strategy" of Soviet specialists and the other one is the expansion of irrigation due to the emergence of large-scale enterprises and collectivization of private land (2003:252). During the Soviet period, rescue plans were based on the redirection of Siberian water resources in order to prevent or to stop the shrinkage of the sea but also at the same in order to continue cotton production. This was, in fact, not a new idea. Already in 1868 such an endeavour was planned but only in 1949 did this project receive more attention. It then became part of the "grossen *Stalin*-Plans zur Umgestaltung der Natur" (Giese 1997:297).[17] In the early 1960s and 1970s, this idea was held on to and different solutions were sought in order to realize the project. By the end of 1986 this project definitely came to an end due to financial costs, economic expediency and also ecological consequences.

Kazakstan and Uzbekistan are the two countries severely affected by this catastrophe and critique against the Soviet period in this respect is also severe. The drying up of the Aral Sea, a huge environmental crisis, made the water issue, irrigation and crop combination an essential theme for many scientific conferences. This did not become any better after the fall of the Soviet Union. After 1991, those of the newly independent states with upstream rivers started to use water according to their necessities, naturally changing the existing distribution patterns and causing a dangerous threat to peace not only on the transnational but also on the local level.

As mentioned before, the oasis of Bukhara owes its existence to Zarafshan River. The amount of water, which Bukhara got, depended on the upper parts of the valley and their water use. For instance, after Samarqand's occupation by Russians in the 19th century, some districts of Bukhara did not get enough water anymore and already at this period did the Zarafshan not reach the Amu-Darya.[18] The construction of the Amu-Bukhara Canal started in the 1940's

[17] Emphasis in original

[18] According to Urchinov (1995), the river today disappears 20 km before reaching the Amu-Darya.

and was finished in the 1970's. Through this the Bukhara Oasis had a reliable source of water in spite of continuous increase of irrigated areas in upper and middle reach of the Zarafshan (Urchinov 1995). In my field setting in Bukhara the fields also got water from the Amu-Bukhara Canal. The famous Zarafshan River had by now ended as a dirty puddle.

Two words are enough to describe the water in Bukhara; it is salty and polluted. By the time it reaches Bukhara, it is not only polluted, but water quality is further worsened through the return of irrigation water. Before cultivation the salt crust is washed from the fields but it ends up, directly or indirectly, in the irrigation water. Furthermore the washing of the fields uses more and more of the scarce resource water.

In the Ferghana Valley water is neither seen as scarce nor of bad quality. The amount of water, whether for domestic or agricultural use, is also not seen as diminishing. The Southern Ferghana Canal provides the villages with enough water and in both settings people are aware of that difference. In order to provide enough water for the mountain foothills (*atir*) where cotton and wheat fields as well as the orchards are located, water is pumped uphill. I was told that 350 litre per second can be pumped for this purpose. In the village water was free, regardless of the purpose it was to be used for. In spite of that there were people whose fields were at the lower end of the canals and who were complaining about the lack of water. This was due to either ignorance and waste of water or to the fact that more water was taken by others then due to them.

Large irrigation canals not only draw physical borders between the settlements and separate the kolkhozes from each other, but they also create social borders. Which settlements get their water from which canal, are well-known and important facts. Canals separate the settlements from each other, but "drinking from the same canal" also lead to a sense of "belonging" and "connectedness", as one *mirab* in Bukhara told me. While his village in an administrative sense belonged to Romitan, since they drank from the same canal as a different *tuman*, his village was in fact much more oriented to the latter. Olufsen points to the importance of water, the fact that the canals have names and that their building and maintenance was a commonly shared job (1911: 491). The distribution of water via canals not only creates administrative tasks, but also when they are cleaned and repaired the local people who use them are brought together for these tasks.

Depending on the amount of water and the individual need of the provinces, water is accordingly distributed. Twice a year the plans are revised and the situation is evaluated, once in spring and once in the fall. This revision also acknowledges the situation of the *fermer* and their needs. *Fermer* do not get water for free, it is added to their expenses. The private plots, however, are not charged. In Ferghana, water is free not only for the private plots but also for the *shirkat* lands where most of the cultivation takes place. However, the agricultural fields and the crops do not share an equal rank when receiving water. As a former kolkhoz present said *shirkat* land comes first, followed by the *fermer* fields, making the private plots last in line. Furthermore, cotton, rice and wheat productions precede fodder production.

In the case of the private courtyard fields, which are small yet not unimportant for a households' food supply, the necessary irrigation water is for the most part delivered by a manual or electric water pump. In Bukhara, this underground water is further used for daily needs, such as washing and cooking (sometimes with the exception of tea). The water was so salty that Alisher took his old Zhiguly car out of his garage and went to buy water in plastic cans from a *vadaprovot*[19] near the *tuman* centre. He was not only proud that he could afford such water for his tea, he also reminded me that the underground water, and especially the water from the irrigation canal, was extremely unhealthy.

Overall, the water was usually not sufficient in Romitan. Especially *fermer* with large fields do not get enough. Some parts are irrigated sufficiently, while others not. Those *fermer* who have their land near the desert generally do not get enough water. Yet complaints of having not enough water were widespread:

> "Actually, cotton needs five times watering, but it drinks maximum three times and not more. Because of the lack of water we often have disputes, as the one at the head of the water source gets a lot of water and the one the furthest away doesn't get enough." (Rashid)

As mentioned, the high soil salinity in Bukhara makes it necessary for fields to be submerged by water once or twice before planting. The water reaches a level of about 30 – 40 cm above the field and is then drained away to the smaller irrigation channels. In Bukhara, where water is a scarce resource and cotton cultivation demands a large amount, disputes about water being stolen

[19] Russian for fountain

or cheating in line are not rare. In order to prevent this, people either end up sleeping next to their *tomorqa* or they go on patrol.

As a valuable resource, when necessary, water can also be used as an instrument of punishment, which leads to the suffering of many people besides the targeted ones. So, according to my informants, some of the villages in Chilongu got less water than others, because this year the "*xokim* is punishing them". He was frustrated, so they said, by the low figures of cotton delivery, in his understanding due to the fact that the villagers took more care on their private plots and thus neglected the cotton fields. As Chilongu is closer to Bukhara city than others, they prefer to sell vegetables and fruits on the town market.

> "He is very angry at Chilongu since the villagers prefer to grow carrots and potatoes and sell them at the market. They have no time left for the cotton. They do not care for cotton fields properly. So, *xokim* does not give enough water to Chilongu and prefers to give more water to the desert." (Sancar)

It was clear that some villages did not get enough water, if they were located offside. It was not unusual to not get enough water for the minimum irrigation of the cotton fields, I was told. Water is a means of political pressure and is implemented for this purpose but people did not always know why there was not enough water.

> "Who knows, if there is really not enough water or if it does not reach us. As the *tuman xokim* punishes our village, maybe the whole *viloyat* is under punishment, after all, the whole *viloyat* did not fulfil the cotton plan. "(Sardor)

Conflicts over water have increased majorly since independence and people take great care to prevent others from misuse. Disputes concerning water even involve relatives. During my stay there were several conflicts amongst close kin. Some of them ended up in court accused of attacking somebody with a shovel. At least one case in Romitan ended with one person being dead. Disputes among *fermer* for this valuable resource had another meaning since they were, in the end, under pressure to fulfil their plan. They were not tolerant of non-*fermer*, *tomorqa* owners and simply wanted to get enough water for their fields. The accusations ranged from stealing water, cheating and irrigating their *tomorqa* when it was not their turn. Nozim was telling me that in the

past years he has taken the responsibility of watching the water distribution since others do not respect the queue. Water is becoming a problem that gets worse every year.

"Before, I sent the children to check and to water the *tomorqa*, but now I do it myself. When I am there, they do not attempt to take my place in the queue. There is a "norm" concerning water. The motor starts to work and water flows for four or five hours. But there are people who at night secretly turn the motor on. Now there are controllers and they shut off the electricity so nobody can go there by night and water their own *tomorqa*. Of course, you can come to an agreement by bringing them some food or paying them with other things like with hay and get your water."

Chapter 4

Economic Strategies: How to make a Living in Rural Uzbekistan

4.1 Introduction

With the just described changes in property rights and the difficulty of having access to key resources people are faced with a fundamentally new situation that forces them to seek for new survival strategies. For most of them this means a dramatically decrease in living standards and consumption. Only a small minority can profit from the new opportunities created by moderate reform politics. The fundamental problem for Uzbek households is that they must pay market prices when consuming goods but do not get market prices when producing them. A comparison of cotton world and domestic prices in Uzbekistan shows that the former is almost 13-15 times higher than what the Uzbek government pays domestic cotton pickers (SOAS Working Paper 2009, 24-25). Thus, Uzbeks are incorporated in the world system as their bread prices are, dependent on world wheat prices, but their invested labour on the cotton fields is measured with a different yardstick. The income of the produced cotton goes to the state budget and not to the producer. People work for a salary (if they get paid at all), which is not enough to survive, not even enough to buy the monthly needed amount of flour to make their own bread.

This chapter focuses on how the economic changes outlined in the previous chapter are perceived and experienced at the local level. I will describe how certain groups position themselves within this post-independent system and

which techniques and strategies they develop in order to cope with difficulties and to manage their lives. This chapter also looks at the attitude of people towards the state's regulations and restrictions. While some actors adapt to the changes and benefit from them, others attempt to stabilize their positions or just try to survive. The chapter begins with a description of the production system and the modified planned economy this implies. This is followed by a survey of labour organization and an analysis of income strategies and household budgets.

> "[In a peasant agrarian economy] the household was perhaps the most flexible and responsive social grouping.... The family household is an institution sensitive to minor, short-term fluctuations in the socioeconomic environment and a prime means by which individuals adapt to the subtle shifts in opportunities and constraints that confront them." (Netting 1979, cited in: Netting et al 1984:xii).

Surviving in post-independent Uzbekistan is not an individual strategy. It is a family or a household strategy within which resources are pooled and decisions are made.[1] An Uzbek household is a production, consumption and reproduction unit in a physically shared place where different generations live together. In the post independence period, this social unit became more and more important for a number of reasons. While it also existed as such throughout the Soviet period, some aspects became more important and visible and new tasks emerged. Furthermore, gender and generation roles have become redefined according to the needs of the post-independence period. In order to describe the budget arrangements within the same courtyard, the terms "eating from the same pot" are used (cf. also Kandiyoti 1998:563). It is difficult to make a clear cut as to when and why households separate their pots or to what extent. After 1991 some families decided to change their "pot system" in one or the other direction. For some of them, eating from one pot is something new and had become necessary, for others it had always been like that, and for yet others it was a burden as they now have to feed more people.

[1] A discussion of the difference(s) between family and household is not a part of this work. I use family, household and the Uzbek word for house (*üy*) as synonyms as would most of my informants.

4.2 Production

Agriculture in the oasis of Bukhara has for a long time been characterized by the growing of grain, vegetables and fruits. All of these have been used for domestic consumption as well as for trade. Fruit trees can be seen along roads, beside orchards or in courtyards. Lucerne, wheat, rice, sesame, cotton, vegetables and pumpkin have been grown for centuries, as well as melons or tree fruits like apricots, plums and almonds. They are consumed in fresh or in dried form as a valuable part of the diet. Especially in Bukhara mulberry trees are an important part of the landscape and its fruit (*tut*) is consumed in fresh and dried form while the leaves of the tree are used in the silk production.

Although cotton cultivation has been done in the region for a long time and already received special attention during the period of Russian colonization, it was the Soviet time when it became the main agricultural crop. Older informants mentioned that they remembered times when the cotton fields had not been of such great importance and livestock had even grazed between the fields (Kandiyoti 2002, Olufsen 1911, Shuyler ([1876] (2004). For decades cotton cultivation has penetrated the lives of the local households and since independence it has continued, making it an even more essential part of their lives. Some kolkhozcu, who had not seen any other crops as dominating, still could not think in any other terms regarding a using of land. It is considered useful particularly because of the side products (which were, in fact, not as necessary in the past).

> "You can get cotton-oil, you can use the oil cake for animal fodder, you can use the stalks, the cotton bolls for heating, for the *tandir*.[2] We also use cotton for our mattresses; it is very useful to cultivate cotton". (Zafar)

Cotton and the Uzbek economy are two inseparable components of one system. But to make the country less dependent on the import of grain, primarily from Kazakstan, the government decided to reduce the amount of land devoted to cotton production in favour of wheat. By 2000, approximately 30 percent of the agricultural land that was formerly used by state and collective enterprises was turned over to grain production. This percentage would even grow in the following years and is today 50 percent. This was done to become more self-

[2] Traditional clay-lined oven on the ground, which is used for bread and *somsa* baking.

sufficient and prevent hunger, which might lead to huge anger especially in the rural settings (Spoor 2009).

> "Bread is very important for Uzbeks. If we do not eat bread we do not feel satiated. For a few years now we have started to cultivate wheat ourselves. Before that, during the Soviet times, we did not. We bought flour from the magazine (shop), sacks full of flour from Kazakstan; it was written on the sacks. There was a lot, but sometimes they had worms and we fed our animals with it. We had white flour, the best quality, more than enough." (Abror)

Cotton and grain are thus today the main outputs of this economy. Data from 2007 shows that the area under grain cultivation is more than 1.5 million ha, out of that 1.4 million ha is used for wheat cultivation, while cotton is produced on 1.45 million ha. The goal of achieving national grain self-sufficiency (with winter wheat) and the indispensible significance of cotton for Uzbek economy lead to a decrease of production of other crops (other grain crops, fruits and vegetables) and does not make crop rotation possible. There has been a decline in cotton productivity, namely a 22% decrease between 1991 and 1998, but this is mainly the result of poorly irrigated land and lack of farm equipment. Aral Sea related environmental problems, low land productivity and salinity also caused a significant decrease since 1990 in high quality lands (Khudoyberdiyev 2010:15-17).

Wheat as a crop is actually preferred by more people if they have the chance to decide. Cotton is labour intensive and is seen as more risky as it is more susceptible to the weather. Therefore even under state control wheat is preferred over cotton. "You just have to harvest the grain once; that is all". For the kolkhozcu their labour in cotton production is not appropriately paid and so it hardly seems worth to work so hard just to get some side products and have access to a field after the picking season. Wheat harvest is in the early summer and after that the fields are more or less free for the kolkhozcu to use.

> "Cotton requires good care. With less work it is not possible. It is important where the field is located, you need certain climatic conditions; the soil of our fields is sandy. The quality of the seeds is important. The European model is nice. If we keep our model, it will be quite difficult for the *fermer*. He works but he does not get what he invests in the work. We should cultivate other things, wheat for example, so we can have a life of well-being." (Qasim)

However, cotton continues to remain the main agricultural crop while wheat and rice follow close behind. While paddy rice, according to Scott (2009:74) "helps to ensure that the population itself remain in place", cotton does not have this power for two reasons. For one, the state economic policy does not see the hard work invested as valuable, and secondly, cotton is not a crop that is meant to feed people. For the workers, the benefit of cotton is limited to its side products such as cotton stalks or oil, and has no nutritious or nourishing value for humans. In Andijon, a limited amount of rice cultivation was allowed and people did in fact prefer rice to cotton for the same reasons. It is eatable in the form of *plov*, the national dish, it is not as labour intensive as cotton (there are different opinions on that but it is accepted because of the first reason), and it is possible to sell or barter it since it has a "market value". Direct self-sufficiency is not possible through cotton. Uzbek hospitality, which is strongly expressed through food, especially by offering *plov*, is directly related to the economic resources of the family. The quality of the feasts and ceremonies were also measured by the food served but especially by the amount and quality of *plov*.

Other crops such as vegetables and fruits are mainly grown in private plots. These constitute the main diet of households and are also necessary fodder for the livestock and poultry. Small-scale agricultural production is quite different than the one described above. It not only involves different products but also timing and specific procedures. The most important produces are potatoes, carrots, onions, and various types of beets. In addition to that, some melons, tomatoes, chives, coriander, spinach, pumpkin and cabbage are also grown. Most people have also started to grow their own wheat in the last few years. In the past, this was unnecessary because flour was affordable and bread in the shops was much cheaper than homemade one. This oven bread (*duhovka non*) is very popular but since it is expensive and not available in the village it is rarely consumed – it is brought from *tuman* as a variety to homemade bread.

Cotton and wheat can be cultivated in rotation, although this is not seen as the best option for the fertility of the soil (ECSSD Working paper 2005:1). In Bukhara, wheat is cultivated for two years in a row and then, without any fallow period, cotton for five years. In the valley too, after cultivating cotton for two years the fields are once used for wheat. According to many informants, especially in Bukhara, the soil quality is not very good anyway and has become

worse after too much cultivation, salinization, lack of water and the intensive use of pesticides and herbicides in the past. Today, the usage of the latter is diminished, especially on private plots, as people cannot afford to buy them.

On the private plots the crop combination needs a thorough plan. Fields are always in use and never left uncultivated – after one harvest comes the next planting. Crops are always rotated. Alisher for example uses 20 *sot* of his *tomorqa*, which is free after the wheat and carrot cultivation, for fodder and the remaining ten *sot* for turnips (Brassica napus L.), carrots and radish. Wheat is grown between October and June, and in June after the harvest, he uses the 23 *sot* from the wheat and seven *sot* from carrots for *maka zhügeri* (sorghum cernuum) which looks like maize without cobs and is used as fodder. The stalks, and leaves are all used for fodder or as burning material. Actually after sorghum cultivation, which ripens in four to six months, the wheat plantation can start again (see also Olufsen 1911: 495).[3] After the wheat plantation, the rest of the land is used for different vegetables such as turnips.

Sowing fodder is inevitable if one wishes to keep animals, which is seen as a lucrative business and also lends a certain financial security to the owner, making it a kind of survival strategy. Since independence, people have tried to keep as many animals as possible. Space and fodder are the main concerns besides profit. Keeping livestock is significant on the one hand because of the households' milk needs and on the other it is an investment, which may come in handy in the case of expected or unexpected expenditures or in difficult times when a considerable sum of money is suddenly needed. Although it has become a coping strategy, the freedom to have such livestock is seen as one the major positive aspects of independence. One milk cow can cover the daily needs of the family for dairy products.

Keeping sheep is complementary to cattle. One sees a few chickens and geese along the street, but they are not awarded any particular care. They find their food while roaming around and are otherwise easy to feed with corn and leftovers. According to the official statistics, since 1991 the number of cattle has increased significantly, by 46% percent, sheep and goats by 25 percent. While poultry decreased considerably by 64% in the first half of the 1990s, their number has been increasing since 1997 (Khudoyberdiyev 2010:19). Very few also raise pigs. Although they are a good income source, they could

[3] It is quite interesting to see that the observations of Olufsen from 1911 have enormous similarities' to my stay in 2000's.

not be consumed within the households themselves but have to be sold on the market in Bukhara (cf. chapter 7.1).

> "It is true, they stink a little, which is why I keep them isolated, but they bring a good profit. One kilo is 4000 *sum*. Here, (in the village) many people do not eat pork; mostly just young people do. It is quite tasty. Of course, the people who pray do not eat pork." (Amir)

Sharzod keeps some livestock; he thinks that cattle breeding is easier than sheep breeding since the latter needs more space. The desert zone can be one place for sheep breeding but in the winter it is cold and there is no real functioning infrastructure with wells and veterinary care as in the past. Still, some nomadic households of Kazak and Turkmen ethnicity use this desert zone of the *viloyat* and, in spite of the almost broken-down infrastructure, try to survive with their animals. Sharzod's household started to keep livestock in 1976. They wanted to have their own milk for consumption and at that time it was also seen as profitable. They slaughtered the animals at home and then sold the meat. They continued this until 1996, but later decided not to slaughter anymore and started to sell the fattened livestock. He explains why:

> "Since 1995, money doesn't have any value anymore. Before that, we used to slaughter the animals and sell the meat. 30% was paid immediately and 70% was paid in rates. Because of the high inflation some people could not settle their outstanding debts. It was difficult and unpleasant to get the money and also it lost its value not only because of the inflation but also because people paid how much they could and when they could.".

Sharzod now has four *kara mal*[4], two cattle and two calves, three goats and three sheep. According to his plan, one of the *kara mal*, a calf, will be fattened and later sold. He can get up to 200,000 *sum* for it and plans to buy a milk cow with the money. He keeps the *mayda mal* for small expenditures. For instance, if he needs 20-30 thousand *sum* at once he can sell a sheep or a goat and get up to 10,000 *sum*. However, he prefers sheep to goat as the latter don't have much meat and don't have a fat tail, which is enjoyed for cooking. They also produce more offspring than *kara mal*, which carries longer. Sharzod provided one example of how lucrative it is for him to keep a certain amount of livestock with his resources and calculations:

[4] Large stock (literally: black livestock). Goats and sheep are referred to as "*mayda mal*".

> "I bought an ox for 150 thousand *sum*. I needed fodder for three months and it cost me 50,000. I don't pay for water and I prepare the fodder myself and thereby can save some money. I sold the ox for 300,000, giving me 100,000 profit. If the meat prices increase, then it is certainly worth it. Next year, if I have ten or eleven offspring from these six *mayda mal*, I will sell one of them. You always need a reserve amount of money for health care, for the car and other things."

Sharzod was planning on having more *kara mal* in order to buy a new car since his old Russian zhiguli breaks down a lot. For this purpose he wants to get a milk cow and later an ox. According to his calculations, he needs four well-cared *kara mal* for a new car. The costs for the livestock caring did not scare him. Firstly, as already mentioned, he uses his *tomorqa* for fodder as chaff and husts of wheat, cotton capsules, rest of pressed cottonseeds or grass on the fields after cotton harvest. Thus, he has to buy little fodder in addition, so that it is lucrative to keep livestock. Of course, any kind of organic kitchen leftovers is also used as fodder; nothing is wasted. The fodder is prepared and stored for months next to the courtyard under the ground digging a large and deep hole that is evened with a tractor so as to preserve the fodder throughout the winter period.

In the Ferghana Valley the problem of space also became a problem for livestock rearing. After independence, with the border drawing, grazing possibilities in Kyrgyzstan are no longer an option. While some people still bring their livestock to Kyrgyzstan by bribing officials, it is not safe and only done on an irregular basis. For instance, if livestock is stolen, the people have no right to ask for help from the Kyrgyz officials. One alternative to taking one's livestock to Kyrgyzstan is transporting them to the mountain pastures on the way to Tashkent for grazing but that is lucrative only for larger herds.

4.3 Plans and Procedures

As explained above, no matter what kind of crop is grown and where it is grown, the state is the ultimate owner of all land and produce, and most agriculture continues to function with plans, restrictions and regulations. Under these conditions the aforementioned three types of agricultural producers carry the agricultural output; *shirkat*, *fermer* and private plots. Each of these has a special law regulation. The last two provide 97% of the gross agricultural

output according to 2007 data. While state orders apply to *shirkat* and *fermer*, they do not to *dehqon* farms.

Fermer sign a contract with the *xokimiyat* every year concerning what (cotton or wheat), when and how they will cultivate. The harvest is sold to the state at fixed prices and once the target has been reached, the rest can be kept by the *fermer* and he is able to decide what to do with it. At least, this is the official version. *Fermer* are not able to bargain or convince the government to change the crop combination in favour of other crops that were seen as more profitable.[5] Any cotton related instance is under state control even though they are formally independent. *Fermer*, as the new agricultural entity, were shown to me as a symbol of "privatization" and independence, since it did not exist under the previous Soviet regime. However, it was clear that the *fermer* lacks all aspects of being "independent" or "private". In particular, the strong *shirkat* and *fermer* linkage, the power of the *shirkat* over the *fermer* and the *fermer–xokimiyat* relationship, briefly the power of state and state institutions on the one hand and the lack of freedom to decide what to cultivate on the other hand were the points which had not changed. It is interesting that for everyone freedom of decision seemed to be more important than to be the owner of the land. Ownership in itself does not create any monetary income, and it is not secure anyway. While this freedom of decision is applied to private plots, also without being "owner", *fermer* were far away from this right. The lack of active decision-making and the freedom to set prices for the crops are two of the main points which made people decide not to become a *fermer*.

In concrete terms, the cotton producer – either a *fermer* or a *shirkat* – strikes an agreement with the nearby cotton factory, the *paxta zavod*. This is not really an actual factory, but more a collection point at which some pre-processing tasks are completed. The factory is responsible for sorting, cleaning, weighing, registering and then delivering the cotton further. The decisive point is whether, at least on paper, the contract or agreement has been fulfilled or not. How suitable the words "agreement" or "contract" actually are in this context is another question. The state calculates, based on the size, location and seed type, the expected output. While the plan is determined according to these calculations, the *fermer* tries to minimize the targets in the plan. The actual agreement is made behind closed doors.

[5] In both regions, Bukhara and Andijon, there are mainly cotton producers. In Romitan 13.400 ha land were set aside for cotton use and 6.600 ha for wheat in 2002.

State support exists by providing infrastructure and other inputs but they are not as strong as in Soviet times. While the state subsidizes the main harvesting costs, input costs are kept as low as possible. Besides providing seeds, diesel and other necessary things, the *fermer* are left to themselves to meet other expenditures, in particular labour force. For this reason, they often use family labour or recruit people ready to work for low and delayed wages. The *fermer* actually function similar to the Uzbek state, simply on a smaller scale, in respect to the input-output relations and expenditure cuts.

The state provides *fermer* with subsidized loans for inputs, which are done by bank transfer but additional costs are not covered or compensated completely. The bank, *xokimiyat* and *shirkat* are all involved in this process that the *fermer* struggle through. As part of the agreement, *fermer* get a tractor from the *shirkat* as part of the infrastructural support and pay for the emerging costs. It is not unusual for a *fermer* and the tractor driver to come to an agreement among themselves, which would be more favourable for both parties. It is favourable for *fermer* who otherwise have to wait their turn in order to use the limited number of tractors so that he can manage his agricultural activities at the optimum time. It is favourable for the tractor driver who can earn some additional money. It is less favourable for the *shirkat* and certainly not possible to do this without the knowledge of its authorities who may demand additional money or services from the *fermer*. Moreover, it is quite difficult to perform this task on the fields without being seen. If a tractor driver secretly uses the tractor, for instance in the night for ploughing the *tomorqa*, it can cause real anger. Still, this is the way things work. A *fermer* described it with these words: "In the end, everything is done for the cotton plan and success of the *fermer* is the success of the *shirkat* in every aspect". This dependency of the *fermer* on the services of the *shirkat* and the *shirkat*'s dependency on the crops of the *fermer* put them in a continuous bargaining relationship. Not only are extra payments made in that process, but personal relationships also play a role (having relatives or school friends). The old technology causes additional stress. One *fermer* expresses his worry as follows: "if the tractor breaks down while on your field, you are in trouble and have to pay for it." (Sabir).

The independence a *fermer* or *shirkat* has is that they are allowed to sell the rest of their produce after the target is reached. At least this is the situation on paper. It may be sold according to "contract" prices which are meant

to create incentives to produce more than in the plan. Similar to the Soviet period, reality and the state's plan do not match and "...the produce sold by collective farms significantly exceeds the share defined as "state order" (Ilkhamov 1998:541). In practice, the *tuman* authorities try to persuade or force them to deliver the entire produce at fixed prices to the local collection points. This shall insure that the *tuman* fulfils its total plan quota (levelling other enterprises that were not able to make it).

The hope that individual farming would bring more profitability and increase the yield did thus not come true. *Fermer* decided to stay non-transparent in order to protect themselves and be prepared for the worst case, for example if they have to pay a fine for an unfulfilled quota or lose the land lease. There is no guarantee that any promises written in the contract will be kept in the future if the wind starts to blow in a different direction. In 2001, Romitan *tuman* fulfilled 82% of the cotton plan. In the entire *viloyat* of Bukhara, only two *tuman* were able to reach 100%. Since the performance of last year was more or less the same, rumours circulated as to whether the *xokim* would lose his position. While, in the end, he did manage to keep it, several *shirkat rais* lost their positions after the first meeting. I was told that the *xokim*, who is at the same time a *fermer*, also did not manage to fulfil his plan.

Among other things, insufficient water is a good excuse for not fulfilling the cotton plan. People often complain about the lack of water and that there is not enough to irrigate or wash out the fields. If the kolkhoz fields are concerned, then these complaints were often heard, partly as a mirror of reality and partly as justification for not fulfilling the plans. Weather is another reason for failing to fulfil the targets. Sometimes the wind blows the ears of the grain away. The *fermer* were waiting and worrying about their targets, but at the same time more meetings were converged.

> "This year it did not work well with cotton anyway, since we were forced to plant with plastic strips (*pilyonka*). I did not have any experience before, but the *rais* forced us to use them and we had heard good things about it. But the weather wasn't good; we had lots of rain and the seeds rotted under the *pilyonka*. We had to start from the beginning again. Furthermore, I had to pay for everything from seeds to fuel. It is not simply a financial problem – you also have to make the bank, the *xokimiyat* and others understand." (Gulshod)

While officially, the reasons for this are given as water scarcity and bad land quality, in reality many *fermer* simply grow less cotton in order to use their

fields for other crops.[6] This land misuse, although it is risky and allegedly there is no tolerance, is not uncommon. I was told that some people actually take this risk, while in other cases the *xokimiyat* and *shirkat* would turn blind eyes as they also profited from the arrangements. How is it that nobody complains about these relatively large divergences? The answer is actually simple and similar to other situations in which people neglect to seek their rights. "If you want to complain that you are in a disadvantage or there are misuses, who are you going to complain to? All the chiefs are involved in it and you'll lose everything you have." (Xalil)

> "If you are a *fermer*, you are seen as a private entrepreneur, and your problems are also seen as an entrepreneur's problem. Nobody cares. You pay 1.200.000 *sum* for one year's leasing. Nobody cares about the inflation or thinks about the *fermer*. If a thing costs ten *sum* and you have to sell it for six *sum*, what kind of market economy is that?" (Sardor)

Land and water are two significant resources for the plan fulfilment but unless there is "good" cooperation with the *xokimiyat*, the plan cannot be reached. There were *fermer* that were able to reach the determined target, but lost their land due to other reasons. In the case of a dispute with the *xokim*, he may recall the land or provide less water for the irrigation in the next season. While these punishment methods also hurt the *xokim*, as the productivity of the fields decreases, he hopes that the intimidation will have some pedagogical effect on the other *fermer* according to the motto "avoid conflict and do what you're told." Cooperation with state officials at different levels is thus another significant factor of success. In the eyes of the local government, the *fermer* and the kolkhozcu do not show enough commitment to the common aim, namely, to fulfil the *tuman*'s cotton plan:

> "Many kolkhozcu go to the bazaar close to Bukhara and sell vegetables and some other stuff. They did not show the necessary insight into the importance of cotton, so the cotton plan is not fulfilled, and the *xokim* is very angry now. In Chilongu, only half of the *fermer* fulfilled the plan. The reason behind that is that the *fermer* do not work properly." (Maxmut)

It does not matter how good *fermer* are linked to the *xokimiyat* and how cooperative they work, there is still a large amount of pressure on them due

[6] See also Trevisani (2008:68) for unofficial land use.

to the plan. A *fermer*, whom I knew well and who had good connections to the *xokimiyat*, was asked every evening by his children, if he had fulfilled the plan. "Tomorrow, tomorrow, definitely tomorrow", was the usual answer. The children were worried since everybody talks about the plans and they had heard stories about *fermer* who had lost their lease in one or two years. In that respect families not only lose an income resource, they also, due to failed investments, have debts to repay. This puts them in a highly insecure situation. The failure or the success of *fermer* is something known by everybody.

In order to cope with plans and other bureaucratic difficulties, fraud and under-the-table arrangements were a very common practice. One way to do so is that the factory can sign the paper that confirms the plan-fulfilment even if it is not the case. But doing that is of course not without a service in return. To cover it up, either additional cotton is sought on the free market (if the price is lower than the bribe) or a similar agreement is struck by the factory with the next level up (again, only if the costs are less than the bribe). One informant felt uncomfortable to talk about it but he started to tell:

> "If we talk about truth and reality, the plan is bought. You pay and buy the plan with dollars if you cannot fulfil it. It means the agreement is not accomplished. Sometimes it is not possible to fulfil, and one then buys it from the zavod by paying dollars. You can cheat and then on paper the plan is fulfilled. In that case you do not get the other benefits like cotton-seed oil or oil cake, but if you actually fulfil the plan you also don't always get the benefits which were guaranteed in the agreement." (Xalil)

The positive or negative performance of a *fermer* thus cannot always or maybe not even primarily be explained by his land quality or access to water. Although contractual agreements do determine everything on paper, there is room to manoeuvre for some people. But how can unfulfilled plans actually be fulfilled? How can this fraud continue? One possibility is to buy the missing amount from other *fermer* who are selling some of their cotton on the black market in order to make some money. While the *fermer* is allowed to keep the surplus amount, any missing amount has to be compensated as a punishment. Those *fermer* can compensate the amount by selling cotton on the black market and using that money to pay their punishment. Depending on the amount bought and sold, it can be a good deal for both sides as the other party can thus fulfil his target. The other option, as described above, is to bribe the zavod and get the document that proves the plan is fulfilled.

Numbers are then manipulated back and forth up to the highest level. I was told that this is a system in which cotton is "cheated" and shifted "underhand" from top to bottom.

> "Cheating starts at the very bottom, of course. The kolkhozcu take cotton to Kyrgyzstan, where they can sell it at a considerably better price. At the middle and upper level, they take and give. Every year the plan is fulfilled on paper. Either the missing amount is bought or the people are bribed. At the upper levels the profit is bigger than at lower levels". (Firdausi)

The question remains of how this all can work out. Do the president and other top officials don't know that the cotton export is lower than the amount officially delivered by the various provinces? This was usually answered by the following simple statement: "Of course the top people know. But they profit from it as well, otherwise it would not work, just like in Rashidov's period." People were thus referring to the infamous cotton scandal. Starting in the 70's and continuing into the early 80's, fake statistics of cotton plans were made and large quantities of cotton were paid for that had never been produced (Spoor 1993, McCauley 2002, Kandiyoti 2002). In 1986, Gorbachev described the situation in Uzbekistan, as one in which "negative processes have been manifest in their more acute form" since Moscow's directives and authority had been seriously eroded by ethnic and local-interest networks while "nepotism", "bribery" and "cheating" were seen as some of the reasons that perverted the personal policies. The dimension of the charges led some local Russian officials but mainly indigenous personal to have to leave their positions or being arresting like the then general secretary of the Communist Party in Uzbekistan, Rashidov. Many officials in different cadres were involved in this scandal at that time by bribe taking and padding reports. "According to the prosecutor of Uzbekistan, in that republic alone the state paid more than one billion (1,000 million) roubles in 1978-83 for cotton that was never produced, according to the "most modest" expert estimates" (Critchlow 1988:143). Similar methods of problem solving existed during my stay. The toleration in the past helped to make the system work. And although some of the reasons may be different today, I think the idea "making the system work", continues to exist in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. The difference today is that it is a national problem.[7]

[7] See Fiermann (1997) for the attitude of Karimov after 1991 to undo things related to the scandal like rehabilitation of some convicted people. The most famous of these is certainly

It is not Moscow's policy anymore.

In reality, plans and agreements are just one part of the story. One day, Gulnoza was complaining about the kolkhoz *rais* and others. A new decree informed the *fermer* that the wheat plan had changed and that they now have to submit more than mentioned in the contract. And that was not all. Gulnoza and other *fermer* could not start with the wheat cultivation because the *viloyat xokim* held one of his unexpected visits to the kolkhozes in order to check the fields and the course of work. As usual in these situations, he was not satisfied with the way things were. For instance, necessary places were not cleaned up and prepared for the coming work. He used a common method of sanctioning and punishing the *fermer* by sending the reapers to other *tuman*, in this case to Karakol and Olot. For the *viloyat xokim*, it does not matter as to which *tuman* is more successful as his political survival is dependent on the success of the entire *viloyat*. This is not the case for the *tuman xokim*.

The case of Gulnoza is an example, although not necessarily typical, of the treatment of *fermer* by the *xokimiyat*. She is a widow in her 40's and the only female *fermer* in the kolkhoz. She lived with her son, daughter-in-law, grandchildren and mother. She has the attitude and the reputation of being strong and able to manage things. This reputation was more than confirmed after her conflict with the *tuman* governor.

> "They told me at the beginning that once you have fulfilled the wheat plan, you are to give the rest of the wheat to them, who then register it and give it back to you. But they did not give it back. They kept my surplus. I gave the amount of wheat the contract said I had to and I was supposed to be allowed to keep the rest. I sued them and won the case in the *tuman*. But the *xokimiyat* appealed and the case went to a higher court in Bukhara, which confirmed the *tuman*'s decision. The entire process went eight months. I won, something that nobody believed to be possible. Once again we signed the agreement this year, although many things are not clear. The *xokim* has one month's time to withdraw the agreement, otherwise it is valid."

Gulnoza got her wheat back from the kolkhoz and she distributed some of it to her kolkhozcu. She organized a common meal at the school; she bought books, pens and other things for the school children. This behaviour of her

the former general secretary of the communist party in Uzbekistan, Sharaf Rashidov. Since the same native Uzbek cadres were involved after independence, pardoning them was more important (Cavanaugh 1992). It is also not unusual to name squares and streets after these people like Sharaf Rashidov Street in Tashkent.

was much appreciated by the village inhabitants and it was a message towards the *tuman* and especially to the *xokimiyat*. "What the *xokim* took away from me was not only mine but also it was taken away from others", she said. Her struggle and dispute with the *tuman* was greeted with mixed feelings in the village. Even if she was right, what she did was seen as risky for her as well as for the other *fermer*. Some *fermer* were scared that because of her they would suffer from the *xokim's* bad mood. For some, however, her fight and struggle for her rights and her success helped others who could also profit from it.

> "There are other *fermer* who also suffer. The procurer of the *tuman* told me to find someone in a similar situation and bring him or her with me to sue the *xokim*. I could not find anybody who would take that step with me. The *xokim* threatened and harassed me. He sent people to check my fields, if I had planted anything besides that in the agreement. He also cut the amount of water I got. He also threatened to take my land from me if my target wasn't reached. "

Gulnoza had become a *fermer* in the first place with the help of the kolkhoz *rais* who had settled the arrangements with the xokim. While they are related, he was also involved in disputes with Gulnoza. Her court case success was out of the control of the local government and it wasn't possible to sweep it under the rug like many other things. For a woman, she was loud and used her situation of being a widow and being vulnerable as a weapon against the *xokimiyat*. Otherwise, being humiliated by the *xokimiyat* is not something unusual. As a woman, Gulnoza was, verbally and physically, treated with more care than a man. In fact, being a widow helped Gulnoza more than having a husband would have. As a widow struggling for her livelihood, she enjoyed more respect. If she had a husband he would have been the person that would have been harassed. She is proud of herself as being the only woman in this men's world. Her success in the past in suing the *xokim* made her braver and this attitude led others to talk about her in a negative manner as if she were mad.

> "Last year, out of 58 *fermer* (in the Bukhara *viloyat*) I was the only one seeking my rights. The *xokim* said that I would be confronted with all kind of difficulties, I told you all. However, the judge was a woman. I think that was good for me. Do you know why? If she were a man, it would be easier to buy him. The whole time they would have told him "let's go out for lunch or dinner" or "take this as a gift". That was my luck."

What Gulnoza points out here are the well-known and never ending meetings of state officials and *fermer*. These meetings, especially the evening meetings, started in the *xokimiyat* and ended in a restaurant or *chayxona*, where shashlik, *plov* and vodka is served. If somebody wants to be a *fermer* or already is one and needs problems to be solved, then he or she covers the costs of the entire evening. This also explains why people think they have good reasons to cheat because the conditions are highly unfair and the system supports it. This is true for all levels of society.

> "The kolkhozcu do not want to pick cotton other than the first or second sort (grade of raw cotton). They are right; it is difficult to pick the other sorts. They are small and difficult to reach. The *xokim* asked the *viloyat xokim* to send him 3000 people to support him during the cotton picking. The answer he received was: get things done yourself, you should manage, it is your *tuman*. Our *xokim* actually did not want to send the children to the fields, but he has to." (Shukrat)

4.4 Technology and Labour Organisation

Besides a tractor, which is needed for the preparation of the fields for certain crops like wheat, no other machine is used. Most of the work is done manually. After independence the amount of machine picked cotton, which was almost two thirds of the production, dropped radically and is at present only ten% of the total harvested in Uzbekistan; the rest is picked by hand.[8] The case of the private plots is similar, not only because of its size but also due to its layout and the sort of crops planted, which do not allow or need any mechanical equipment. Manual labour is available and sufficient. If a *fermer* family owns its own tractor, it is usually also used in their *tomorqa*; otherwise tractors have to be rented either from a private person or from the kolkhoz. But the other solution, which is illegal but cheaper, is to pay the kolkhoz tractor driver for his time and for the petrol needed. A long term and effective solution to the problems of Uzbek agriculture necessitates financial investments in technology, labour and water. The decline in mechanization is one of the main problems. After independence, MTP's (Machine Tractor Parks) came to be different than

[8] EJF Report (Environmental Justice Foundation). http://www.ejfoundation.org/page145.html visited in: 26.06.2011

in the Soviet time.[9] There were fewer machines in use and new technology was limited.

> "You need *zapcha* (spare parts) for the tractor. We do not get the Russian parts any more or only irregularly. They have to be ordered; if you order them, you do not know if you will get them in time. And after you replace one part, you'll have to replace another. Nobody discusses the problem; the chiefs just want the things to work." (Xalil)

Most people are still partial to Russian technology. Not only do they know how to use it, but it is also seen as more suitable for the present conditions. This is especially the case for people who learned to work during the Soviet period. Skills and knowledge of Russian tractors or technology exist in abundance. Shifts from acquainted technology are seen as challenging and make people uncomfortable. The Russian tractors have a sprocket system, which was seen as robust and as best suitable for Uzbek soil, especially for places like Bukhara. They have power that American tractors do not have. In contrast, the new tractors produce more dust and don't penetrate deep enough into the soil. However, for people who depend on technology for their fields, such as the *fermer*, a regular availability is more valuable than the place of origin of the tools.

> "The new tractors destroy the ground and break easily. Maybe the new technologies can be effective but in the end how and where do you get the spare parts from? These are not only expensive but also hard to get in time. In agriculture, things must be done in time." (Ali)

In the valley, the kolkhoz attitude towards the new tractors was not different than in Bukhara. There were 33 tractors in the kolkhoz and nine of them were new. These new ones were from the Tashkent tractor factory and had an American motor. Ali' was not particularly enthusiastic about these tractors, as they raised too much dust. He preferred the old Russian tractors but they are slowly breaking down and can not be replaced completely. The kolkhoz is in charge of small spare part replacements; kolkhoz and *fermer* together when it comes to larger ones. Ali worked in MTPs before independence and also during the economic restructurings. He misses the past, before the emergence of new production units like the *fermer*, when MTPs were more powerful. "... in

[9] During the Soviet period these were called MTS (Machine Tractor Station). Today, they give farms heavy equipment in return for pay. This is arranged by contract and is paid out in products or cash (cf. Butterfield 2001:133; Takao 2002).

the past, we were independent; we did not beg the kolkhoz for our needs. We were a separate department, but now things have changed".

Technological dependency is especially relevant in larger-scale farming. Only a few of the *fermer* have their own tractor. I was told that in the entire Bukhara *viloyat*, 27 *fermer* leased tractors and eight of those were in Romitan *tuman*. If a *fermer* were to decide to buy a tractor, he would probably buy a Russian one, as they are cheaper than the American ones but better than the Uzbek-American ones. Money was therefore a more important issue than any of the other ones mentioned before. A *fermer* could buy an Uzbek-American tractor for four million *sum*, pay 600,000 immediately and pay the rest off in 5 – 7 years. A Russian tractor costs about 5 – 10 million *sum*, while an American one costs about 50 – 60 millions.

Besides new versions of the already existent technology, a new cotton cultivation method with plastic film is also used. This new technology, however, is controversial and not particularly welcomed by kolkhozcu. While it was first used in Romitan during my stay, it was in fact more common in the Ferghana Valley. The cottonseeds are planted under plastic strips, called *pilyonka*, which keep the seeds warm so they begin to develop quicker and sprout. The holes in the *pilyonka* are widened by hand so as to create space for the growing shoots. After a month, the *pilyonka* is taken away and the young plants are thinned out by removing some of the leaves, five shoots in one meter. When they reach the size of a hand span, the *pilyonka* is completely removed for weeding, fertilizing and watering.

Since the cotton fibre maturity is reached at an earlier stage than by the conventional method and the water does not evaporate that easily, less water is needed and the quantity of the crop can be increased, which are arguments by the *shirkat* who prefer this method. Further, the possibility that the fields can be, due to the *pilyonka*, used for other crops after the cotton season makes the *pilyonka* also be preferred by some kolkhozcu. However, if the *pilyonka* is blown away by the wind, it has to be replaced. There are also more worms under the *pilyonka*, which can damage the cotton. However, since there is enough labour power to remove the worms, this does not serve as an adequate argument against the *pilyonka*. Cotton is not cultivated under *pilyonka* in all places; it is mostly used in the Andijon *viloyat*, but not in the Ferghana *viloyat*.

> "Here in Andijon, *pilyonka* is dominant, that is, however, not the case in Ferghana. Cotton cultivation is done according to the order of the *xokim*. It is probably done in Andijon since the owner of the *pilyonka* factory is a relative of the *xokim*." (Axmat)

Pilyonka as a new technology is not welcomed in Bukhara, as it was perceived disadvantageous. If the amount of water is not correctly managed, especially if too much water runs under the *pilyonka*, everything rots as the plastic mixes with the soil and cotton. According to kolkhozcu, using *pilyonka* ripens cotton 15 days earlier than the conventional method, which is not worth at all.

> "It may work in the valley, but not here. Our soil is pure loam. When it rains, the *pilyonka* mixes with the loam and you lose the cotton. Last time we started earlier. The *tuman* told us to start with the cottonseed planting, although we said it was too early. It turned out to be a mistake, of course, as it rained heavily and we had to remove the *pilyonka* and everything else and start from the beginning again." (Shukrat)

Another problem with *pilyonka* nobody seemed to worry about are its ecological consequences. The used strips were lying near the fields, blowing away and found hanging on trees. Also. the *pilyonka* made the reflections of the sun stronger and I was told that "Chinese quality" sunglasses do not protect the eyes from complications. Many kolkhozcu also complained about how expensive it is to buy good sunglasses and some are even skeptical as to if they even really protect the eyes.

While the current period is thus often described as "time of work", partly due to the de-mechanization, the socialist era is also depicted as harsh. More cotton meant more fields; more fields meant more water and a greater demand for labour. Cotton is labour intensive and needs more water than any other crop. Omida, who is in her late 60s, remembers the pressure of the Soviet era. Her husband was a brigade chief who forced her to work in the fields even though she had just given birth to a child. He did this so people would see he was doing his job and would also feel responsible enough to work in the fields. It was not uncommon for people to avoid labouring in the fields and simply work on their own plots. Children were also forced to join cotton-picking teams so as to meet the targets, which is no different today (Carley 1989, Gleason 1991, Spoor 1993, Kandiyoti 2002).

As became clear in the preceding section, decision-making is a top down affair. One part of this is the regular meetings (*yighilish*) concerned with the

fermer duties and administrative orders, as well as information updates and "reports" about the progress of the harvest. An interlocutor complained about being very tired because of these meetings, not only due to their frequency, but also their length. These meetings always deal with the same contents, namely planning and observing the stages of agricultural activity. They would often take place in the early morning or late night.

> "You continuously have sessions and meetings. Sometimes there are meetings every day, hours after hours. And for what? For Nothing. You spend time waiting. The kolkhoz *rais* or the *xokim* will tell you that the plan must be fulfilled. It is about finding a scapegoat for the problems, to make somebody responsible. ... They need two or three hours for things they could say in an hour, and it is always the same things: 'Clean up and prepare the fields, water the plants'." (Akram)

At the very bottom, the kolkhozcu decides nothing himself, he is told everything. While they play a very important role in the production process, they are the farthest down on the cotton cultivation hierarchy. If things don't turn out as planned the kolkhozcu is reprimanded and told to think and care more for the cotton.[10]

Around the 25th of March, cottonseeds were planted in Bukhara. Before that the ground had been prepared – usually in January depending on the weather. The soil is cleaned and watered two to three times depending on the amount of water available.[11] Olufsen describes the salty soil using the following these words:

> 'One thing is very injurious to the agriculturist in Bokhara, namely the salt which is everywhere apt to the appear, and in the mountains the wide grass-fields often shine and smell of salt which fills the grass-tufts like hoar frost." (1911: 495)

15 to 20 cm interval holes are dug and three to four seeds are placed in it hoping that one of them will grow. The seeds are kept in water. Seeding is done by tractor. The dust caused by the tractor makes the work on the fields difficult and exhausting for the kolkhozcu. When I was on the fields, it was explained to me that health problems caused by pesticides and herbicides

[10] In 2007, employment in the agricultural sector was 26.5% of the economically active population; this is nearly three million people (Khudoyberdiyev 2010:19).

[11] Kandiyoti describes the same procedure for the neighbouring province Khorezm (2003:235).

during the Soviet period don't happen anymore, as the former are forbidden and also too expensive. I was, however, also told the opposite by others.

In August and September the cotton bolls mature and the picking season starts. This must be done as soon as possible before it rains, which would lead to quality loss. The quality of cotton balls picked at later points decreases. First grade cotton is harvested in the first few weeks. In later periods, mainly children still work in the fields. With their small hands they can pick the last small cotton balls, while the adults are at that point already engaged in other activities. The payments to pickers also decline parallel to the cotton grades. I was told that the payment difference among the first and third grade is almost half. But it is not unusual for *fermer* to pay the corresponding amount of money to cotton pickers. In that respect, kolkhozcu talk about the *fermer* according to his or her personal experiences, and whether promises are kept making him or her being a "good" or a "bad" *fermer* regarding a proper payment in time.

This is the most labour-intensive period for the entire village. Mobilizing the village's population, including the children, for the harvest is not uncommon and was also done in Soviet times. It is seen as a "national duty" of everybody to join the harvest. It is not a question of choice; people are obliged to provide labour support in the peak periods. Not only is this the duty of the kolkhoz, but also of many other institutions able to provide additional labour, especially schools. Several months are spent with watering and weeding (roughly from until August) and the fruit – the cotton balls – is waiting to be picked according to the motto of "*hamma paxtaga*" ("everybody to the cotton fields!"), written everywhere. Government buildings also seemed to be empty as the personnel was either in the fields themselves or at a meeting – but definitely engaged in some activity that had to do with cotton. After a few vain attempts at visiting the *xokimiyat*, I was told not to come back before the work in the cotton fields was finished as nobody were to be found in their offices.[12] "Cotton stress" can continue until November and December until nothing is left unpicked in the fields so as to fulfil the targets. The quantity

[12] I was happy to get this information since at the beginning I was given a different answer every day. I was not told that people do not appear at work during the picking season, but simply that the person was "not here today" or would be "coming later". I was even sometimes asked to sit and wait by somebody, who later disappeared, until I was told by someone else that I should better leave. "Wait" or "now" in the Uzbek context is always associated with a later point in time than the word would actually imply, or may not indicate any specific time in the foreseeable future.

and quality of this cotton is low by then because of the rain or first snow.

The teachers are also brought to the fields by their duty to supervise the children. While the school year starts in September, nobody was at school at that time during my stay, as all students and teachers were absent picking cotton. I was told that starting from seventh grade children were subject to compulsory cotton picking. The number of children and how many days they were employed varied from one place to the other. Under the heat of the sun, without enough food and breaks, cotton picking is an exhausting and exploitative work. Sometimes children were sent for two or three months from one place to another, where the necessary labour force was missing.

Another important person in the fields, in the past and present, is the tractor driver. The mentioned tractor driver Ali has a heavy workload from March to August. In March he starts ploughing and prepares the fields for the cotton planting. After this, the entire field is filled with water to wash out the salt and the water then drained out and re-routed into the canal. He would then plant the cottonseeds by tractor and after 5 – 8 days the first sprouts could be seen. The tractor is then no longer used as the cotton balls could be damaged and manual labour intensifies. He ploughed around ten hectares a day. After the cotton season, he would work in the wheat fields from August until September or even November and then has "free time" between December and February, which he uses for small repairs needed by the kolkhoz tractors.

As agriculture is the main income source for the state and the people, it became very normal to meet people on the fields or see them preparing something related. Furthermore, peoples' private plots are also extremely important and cannot be neglected. Doctors, teachers and others not directly related to the kolkhoz or *shirkat* also spend significant time on their own plots. Child labour or in the case of family internal work organisation – the help of the children – is indispensible on the private plots. After school, the children help their parents in the fields for many hours depending on the season. For instance, in summer, when they do not have school, the children get up early and help their parents before the summer heat makes it difficult to work in the fields. During the noon heat, they have lunch and relax at home before continuing. Sowing and the harvest period keep the whole family busy. Children are very often used also to bring things here, to bring things there. They carry information and goods from home to the fields and back again. While post-independence children learned things from their parents, in the past children received practical

training in the eighth and ninth grade and worked in the kolkhoz – whoever did not, was not allowed to attend an institution of higher-level education. Since this system no longer exists, the children's family is the most important knowledge transmitter.

The work on the plots needs any labour available. Only the sick or very young members are allowed to stay away from the fields.[13] Observing the weather, calculating available resources and technical support, organising the division of labour among the family members according to their other duties and capacity; everything is thoroughly organised. Work in vegetable gardens is based on family labour and the necessary manual work is done by different family members. While sowing is mostly the work of an adult male, women and children do weeding. When fields needs water, the man give orders but the children do it under his supervision. All family members participate in the harvest of the crop. Mostly men make the decisions and make time planning on what to cultivate, although in many cases other family members will be consulted. It is a routine but a serious work to plan the usage of kitchen garden as well as the *tomorqa*. The care of domestic livestock is also organized. If the children are young, they are told how much fodder they should give to which animal and what they should do and what not.

For children, working on the cotton fields and helping their families is part of their daily life. Families are dependent on their labour power even if it is used on their small family plots. Alisher told me that if the children learn things during their childhood, they get used to the work and are able to manage their lives easier. He tried to show and to teach them how, what and when to plant, how to irrigate crops and how to organize their work. Besides helping him on the field and at home, they got other jobs to do as a part of Alisher's education philosophy and preparation for the future life. Iskandar, the elder son, sometimes left home at 1.30 am in order to sell onions on the neighbouring village bazaar. Onions were normally transported by tractor with other loads of people from the village. But Iskandar took the bus from the village since he did not have a heavy load with him (ca. 20 kg of onions). His younger brother joined him at 4.00 am. The bazaar is closed at 10 am so it is necessary to be there early and sell the produce as quickly as possible. After the bazaar, Alisher sent his sons to pluck weeds and grass for the animals, which grow in scattered areas along the canals and between the fields where everybody has

[13] For more information on this subject see Wall & Evers 2006:6

free access. But at that point his mother intervened and said:

> "You should also go and join them, otherwise it is a shame (*uyat*), if only the kids work". (Gulshat)

Private plots were also a place of knowledge transmission from one generation to another. Irrespective of the job and status of the person, these were seen as a guarantee for reliable income and as a survival resource. Therefore to teach children the necessary knowledge was seen as an essential part of their education. According to Alisher, on the bazaar the children learn many different things. It is not only about money but they also need to occasionally fight for their rights, for instance to get a good place where all the onion sellers are, or not to be ignored or treated unfairly by others, especially by adults. Waking up early and doing all these things, of course, costs them quite an effort and as a father Alisher recognizes and appreciates this. For Alisher their schooling comes first, but knowledge of agriculture and animal keeping, as well as dealing successfully with money were necessary to be successful and survive.

> "Now the circumstances are tougher than when we grew up. Even when they study and get a job as a lawyer or a procurer, they should know these things. They need to know how to calculate and know the value of money. If they earn some money by themselves, they will appreciate it."

In contrast, Alisher's fifteen-year old daughter helped primarily at home and occasionally in the fields. He managed to keep his daughter at home and not send her to the fields for cotton picking thanks to his network since he works at the school. According to him any work is better than on the cotton fields. "Her work load at home is nothing to compare" he said.

> "I do not want to send my daughter to other places for cotton picking. Early in the morning they get merely a cup of tea with sugar and bread. For lunch and dinner they get plain noodles. No bath and bad sleeping facilities. They have their fixed daily ratio of how much cotton they have to pick. She is not used to this kind of work and under these conditions, it is really heavy work."

The absence or downscaling of mechanization, as indicated, leads to more labour being needed at the peak of the season. According to a survey coordinated by Kandiyoti, the Uzbek case has some quite distinctive features in this respect (SOAS Working paper 2009). Cheap labour is provided especially

by children and by people who have no alternative. This intensively used and very cheap labour force allows the Uzbek government to make huge profits on the world market. The cotton producers like the *fermer* are also not the ones making the major profit, but the "nominally state-controlled joint-stock trading companies" gain wealth with their non-transparent operations (SOAS Working paper 2009:37). Because of the violations of signed agreements on the protection of children's rights, some international companies have started to ban products with Uzbek cotton. Also, with the help of a new technology, retailers can trace the blended cotton, which originates from different countries, leading to companies like Tesco in the UK to withdraw their contracts.[14]

A simple look at the child labour practices, as described above, shows the reality in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan. It is one of the most problematic aspects of cotton growing. Although Uzbekistan signed the ILO Convention 182 there has been no improvement in that respect.[15] The cotton work during the Soviet time was no less important than today. Continuous dependence on cotton exports in present Uzbekistan and the recruitment of child labour for this purpose has its roots in the Soviet command economy, according to experts.

> "Global patterns suggest that it is generally families and/or employers who tend to be the major initiators and beneficiaries of children's work. Uzbekistan represents a rare instance of state-sanctioned mass mobilization of children's labour. The principal beneficiaries are not households or primary producers but state-controlled trading companies higher up the value chain. Their exclusive control over cotton export revenues and their ability to appropriate the profits generated by the disparity between domestic and international market prices gives them a stake in the maintenance of the current procurement and labour control regime (SOAS Working Paper 2009 p:vi).

[14] For instance, Tesco, Marks and Spencer in the UK and Wal-Mart in the USA banned products containing Uzbek cotton.
http://www.rferl.org/content/Seeds_Of_Child_Labour_Lie_Deep_In_Uzbek_Cotton_Industry/1738167 (visited:25.05.09)
http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/may/24/retail-ethicalbusiness (visited:25.05.2009)

[15] "The government of Uzbekistan appears to be in breach of several ILO Conventions to which it is signatory. These include the 1973 Minimum Age Convention, No. 138; the 1999 Worst forms of Child labour Convention, No. 182; the 1930 Forced Labour Convention, No. 105." (SOAS Working Paper 2009:vi).

4.5 Diversification of Income Sources

The hard work in the Soviet Union had its benefits; wages were sufficient and products were affordable. This even though, according to some sources, Soviet Central Asia was described as being poor and backward in comparison to other parts of the Soviet Union and having a high population growth, unemployment and lower wages than elsewhere (Rywkin 1979; Fierman 1991; Patnaik 1995).

Today, the only people paid by the state are teachers, medical personnel and administrative staff. Being employed by the state means having a regular income. Although the salaries are different than in the past, a job is still seen as a certain guarantee of security, not least because of the various networks and other possibilities it enables. This is not the case for kolkhozcu who form the bulk of the rural population. Very few people work outside the kolkhoz. One person I knew worked at the airport in Bukhara. Another worked as the operator of a gas station near Marxamat. He had previously been working in the state *neft* (petrol) company and later received the license for the gas station. In the countryside another important private business is transportation. People drive others around in their cars or mini buses, or work as a hired driver. A regular bus connection, which existed in the past, basically disappeared as the Uzbek state withdrew from this sphere of responsibility.

At the time of my research, state employees made 15 to 20 dollars a month and were, with a few exceptions, paid regularly. Other salaries are in a similar range, although less reliably paid in time. On the contrary, pensions were always paid regularly. A young family without job and wage security of the past and working as kolkhozcu does not have it easy; not only because of the low and irregular payments, but also because they have much less opportunity to make additional money. However, having an older generation as part of the household provides a small, yet steady and reliable income source. *Tomorqa* of the retired generation can also be cultivated additionally.

In 2002, his family had, according to Shukrat, a total monthly income of the following. He as a schoolteacher earned 20.000 *sum*. His wife Zaynab, as a medical assistant, received 9.400 *sum*. His parents together had 62.000 *sum* pension, which was well above the average. These were the official payments without any additional income source. They were altogether seven people, living and eating from one pot. I should admit that in my visits to families with limited income possibilities, like young kolkhozcu family with small children,

talking about the income and the expenditures was not an easy subject. The house, furnishing and other obvious indicators not only make it difficult to talk about hard numbers, but also unnecessary. As an ethnographer, who enters their lives, observes and asks questions, it is not necessary to ask things that are obvious. When talking to people of other, higher income levels, it was, in fact, much easier to talk about concrete numbers.[16] I had the feeling that even visiting them and talking to them at all, being a guest, was a burden since it forced them to be good hosts and cook for me, which signified a major expenditure in their household budget.

The life of the kolkhozcu was affected by more radical changes than any other people in rural Uzbekistan. In the past, the kolkhoz offered them a regular job and sufficient wages. It had, as Humphrey (1998) pointed out, many more functions beyond employment. In spite of this, the collectives remained state production units and many workers kept their ties to the kolkhoz or sought employment with the new established *fermer*. As mentioned, *fermer* were usually forced to take all the workers previously employed in the brigade on his land. However, these workers often do not receive their salaries, as their employers also do not get their compensation in time. The cash payment is highest during the cotton-picking season; otherwise most of the time there is a struggle with the *shirkat* and *fermer* in order to get some money. As elaborated above, unpaid salaries are compensated not only in products but also by allowing kolkhozcu to cultivate for their own needs after the harvest on the fields (see also Kandiyoti 1999). Still, the kolkhozcu lost more than anyone else in the restructuring process in agriculture. They work the land given to them by the *shirkat* and deliver their target in the hope that they can use the land afterwards for their own basic needs. The saddest thing is that the benefits of the kolkhoz disappeared and left the kolkhozcu with nothing. How much he or she works doesn't matter to the *shirkat* or *fermer*, as there is enough labour supply available.

> "It was good in the 80's. We had a monthly salary plus an additional payment (yearly). After the cotton season we got cotton seed-oil and other benefits. Now, in this new way of thinking, we cannot manage. You get what you work for on a daily basis, however, only if the *fermer* gets his benefits, such as oil. First the *fermer* must be paid and only

[16] I do not claim that only low-income group hide and others speak frankly. What I try to say is that it is easier to show and talk about income if somebody has enough to live off. Of course, the reality in that aspect is still hidden.

then can he pay." (Timur)

On the other hand, *fermer* and *shirkat* complained how unreliable the kolkhozcu were. It was not rare that kolkhozcu would stop going to the fields and the *fermer* would try to get them to start work again. What also happens is when a kolkhozcu urgently needs money he may disappear and go to work in Bukhara as a daily labourer (*merdikor*) and then return to work for the *fermer* again. The salary of a kolkhozcu working for a *shirkat* is merely paid for five months. As mentioned, throughout this period he cares for a piece of land (between 0.5 and 1 ha) and it is his responsibility. In this time period cottonseeds are planted, the field is cared for and irrigated. 4,000 to 5,000 a month is paid making a total of 20,000 to 25,000, in most cases to be paid in flour. During the picking season there is no salary and money is earned depending on the collected amount of cotton. One of my interlocutors had 50 *sot* and for 1.5 tons of picked cotton he got 30,000 *sum*. The rest of the time there is no work and no payment. Whether working for *fermer* or for *shirkat*, the burden of the cotton plan rests on the shoulders of the kolkhozcu.

It is impossible to survive with a salary that low even if paid regularly. The expenses people have, whether as a kolkhozcu, a teacher or a *fermer*, are much more than their income. The Uzbek puzzle thus is, how it is possible to regularly spend more than what one earns, with life-cycle ceremonies being so expensive. Talking about official employment and salaries is not a difficult subject and people talked freely about how poorly they are paid. However, it is obvious that people could not afford their living simply with their state salaries. A definition of what the main income source and what the supplementary income sources are, is difficult. State salaries may not actually be the main income source(s), but simply open doors for other income source(s).

The decisive point is often not what they actually earn, but what they can make through their positions. Significant parts of their income come from unregistered work and payments. For older people the possibility of alternative incomes are more limited, which makes them even more dependent on pensions. This led many households to seek new income sources, which were strongly based on the informal sector, household plots and the second crop economy. For many people there were no longer many alternatives if they decided to stay at home and not move to Tashkent, Kazakstan or Russia. One should not think that there are no other alternatives for additional income sources –

based on activities of a legal, illegal or mixed character.

Of outmost importance here are the private plots. As mentioned before, land is a scare good and without water it has little use. During the Soviet time, the small plots were seen as more important than the collective fields or one's job. They were not the main provider of a households' income since the salaries were regularly and sufficiently paid, but they were supplementary to the income. After independence they did not lose any significance. On the contrary, for many households they became the main source of income and livelihood. Today investing more time in one's own plot is the often only possibility for having access to the market so people can get fair prices and money necessary for immediate needs. As with pensions, additional plots of one's parents are highly beneficial. For everybody, for every occupational status, private plots offer an essential income source. A young doctor in the valley who was working in the *tuman* centre, did not even earn enough for his livelihood. Once when we were talking in the courtyard of his house, he showed me the grapevine and a hanging bunch of grapes.

> "By keeping these grapes for winter I can earn more money than my entire salary. We try to cultivate whatever we can; watermelons, tomatoes, potatoes, fruits, vegetables. Besides our plots, we have two pieces of land for constructing a house for my brothers. Until we begin with the construction, we also use that land." (Akram)

Another source of income available to everybody is, as mentioned, animal keeping. Although Uzbeks are not nomads and animal husbandry is not the main economic activity, today it has become more and more important for economic welfare. Unless one urgently needs money, for example in the case of a sickness, the money will be re-invested in livestock without any interruption. If this works, it brings a certain amount of relaxation and security to the family. This is a kind of general recipe, which serves as a possibility to improve one's living standard. Rich and well-off families have often ten and more *kara mal* and some sheep. Middle-class families come along with two or three *kara mal* and a few sheep.

> "A poor person is a person without *mal*. If you are intelligent, you know how to get cattle unless you are sick or lazy. If you manage to increase the number of animals, you are fine. ... Do you see, this one will be fattened and then we will sell it. It is important for the house, which we are going to build for my son." (Axmat)

People who have no *mal* are either not able to buy one or have to sell what they have. The reason can be immediate need for cash, e.g. due to health problems, or for other large expenses like house construction or a wedding ceremony. Animal husbandry is the main source of money for these kinds of expenditures. Ideally, one buys animals and fattens them before being sold. But many kolkhozcu have neither the money for fodder nor other cash money resource, so that usually they sell the livestock before they get fat.

> „If you have one million *sum* in your pocket, you can do business with livestock. In the village, there are perhaps a few people who can do it. Buy from the poor, fatten them and sell them. That's how you can make money in the market. " (Shukrat)

The search for additional income sources is not something new in independent Uzbekistan. During the Soviet Period there was also an informal sector that was very important. Earning money additional to one's official salary or even more than one's salary was not unusual. The second economy is seen as "an integral part of everyday life in all socialist societies" (Sampson 1987:121) and there was a co-existence of official and unofficial sectors. Sampson classifies under second economy, "the informal or illegal activities that enterprises use to fulfil their plan; underground factories; paying bribes or tips in order to buy something in a store or to induce planners and controllers to revise plans; buying and reselling goods obtained from shops for foreigners; and selling scarce or rationed goods taken from the sate" and he sees these activities as "neither typically capitalist nor universally illegal" (121). "[S[econd economy made quasi market arrangements" (Kurkchiyan 2000:84) like 'islands of capitalism' in which the spirit of free initiative thrives in spite of stifling bureaucracy" (Sampson, 1987:121).

Trade is one major source of additional income. Few people work at the bazaar permanently or engage in regional and long-distance trade with other parts of the country. But this type of employment is based on non-regular and insufficient payments. Many kolkhozcu try to sell parts of their crops at the market and get some cash. In addition, some collect the crops from other households to bring it to the market and keep the profit. Zafar, for instance, had some carrots, which exceeded his own consumption. Instead of making the effort to bring it to the market, somebody from the village came to him, paid him 20 *sum* less than the market price and sold the carrots at the market. If he knows the person well and he is trustworthy, the person is allowed to pay

the money after returning from the market.

In most villages, there is a number of private shops and few state shops, a remnant of the past, which had a much smaller variety than the private ones. Why and how these shops continued to exist is a puzzle I did not manage to solve. Business trips are usually done at night and traders return to the village in the early morning. The owner of one shop told me that coming soon, they would not be allowed to sell foreign goods; they should merely sell Uzbek goods. Another and very common possibility is to buy one thing here and to sell it somewhere else therefore making a profit.

> "What can we sell, if we don't sell foreign goods? Are there Uzbek products; are there Uzbek textile products for example? Everything is from China, how can it work?" (Ulugbek)

Other sources are of a less legal nature. Often, these activities can be directly related to the main job. For instance, a garage worker doing repairs would receive a salary and a certain percent of the money but his main income came from his engagements after working hours on a private basis. In the sector of higher education, giving private lessons is an especially good source of income (see also Rasanayagam 2002b). Many people would talk about "buying diplomas" and the view that students could get their titles without attending classes is widespread. Similarly, doctors can charge extra money for their services, for providing beds in the hospital or by asking for money for an operation. This additional income is, of course, difficult to separate from bribes. Payments can also be given in form of gifts.[17] A good bookkeeper can work for another institution and get some additional money although officially he can only be employed at his first workplace.

> "Everybody gets extra money aside from their salaries. Teachers, doctors, drivers, they all ask for extra money in order for them to do their jobs. The only people without any money and not able to ask for money are the kolkhozcu." (Rashid)

Complementary incomes are not always directly linked to people's main job, at least not at first glance. One state official in Chilongu, who was working in the *xokimiyat* responsible for the payment of the pensions, also had a flourmill in the village. His son was in charge of the mill and so they got some additional money for the entire household. Out of 50 kg wheat they got ten kg bran and

[17] See Werner (1997) for the case of Kazakstan.

40 kg flour, and for each kilo the mill owner received four *sum*. Another family in the valley owned a *separator*, which is used to make cream from milk. A group of families would come together and everyday one of them give milk and gets cream. The payment is also made by allowing the owner of the *separator* to keep a portion of the cream and milk. Another case is that of the caretaker of a water pump in a village near Romitan. As a widow of 50 she is living with her son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren. She is responsible for the water pump and the needed equipment. Together with her son, she gets 18.000 *sum* for this job and was hoping to get ownership rights of the water pump.

> "If it were private, I could sell the water. Just like other people get land for cotton, I want to get the pump. If I don't take care of the pump the cables, other people will take metal and iron parts of the motor away. During the Soviet time nobody cared and nobody needed these parts but nowadays they can be sold on the market for a profit." (Gulnoza)

It is especially welcomed and favoured by parents if their daughters earn money by sewing and baking. In every village there are some women, who, as tailors, contribute to the household income. These jobs are regarded as especially useful for her and the family as it is considered a suitable engagement for a young girl to earn money. It is also not necessary to travel for this work. In fact, they do not need to leave home and they can still manage their duties at home. Moreover, a woman with this qualification is also presentable as a "skilful" and good marriage partner.

> "A woman is a good woman when she manages her house and takes care of her children well. ... They learn how to sew in the village. It is possible to earn some money through that, and if not, it is useful anyway for herself and for the people around her. In contrast, if she goes off to study, during the holidays she should go to the fields for cotton picking at least for two or three months. It is difficult; you are worried the whole time about how they are doing." (Firdausi)

Like sewing, baking tortes per order can also help to provide an additional income source. This is also not without an effect on the chances and ambitions of young girls. For the parents, acquiring this kind of domestic and gendered skills is more preferable than sending them to university. Azoda is 17 and after school she takes a baking course in the neighbouring *tuman*. She either gets her orders, bakes at home or people take her to their place and she prepares

pastries there. She gets 500 to 1000 *sum* or more depending on the individual request. Her mother is a tailor and the whole family profits from the additional financial support of these two engagements.

The question in such a situation is why do people work at all? It is not unusual for people to continue to work even though after transport costs almost nothing remains of their salaries. To be connected, to be informed and to be close to certain institutions is more important than a suffering from a lousy salary. Where one works is more important; not because of the "real income" but for the connections, networks and corruption possibilities. Maxmut was one of a handful of people in the *tuman* who has access to certain resources thanks to his position in the *xokimiyat*. For people like him, the situation after independence either remained the same or even got better. He claimed that "15.000 *sum* is the monthly salary, it is just enough for two sacks of flour." Then how can he afford the living standard that he has enjoyed? Simply by being a *fermer*? People in his position are able to keep the rest left over after plan fulfilment and are allowed to do whatever they want with it. They can even make money without fulfilling the plan. Another aspect of how people work and deal with the current situation was described with following words:

> "I work according to my salary. It is just not enough; therefore I do not work hard. I work on my plot, do my things or relax. Actually, telling you that the salary is not enough is a state secret, I should not tell you something like that since I work for the state, I am an employee of *xokimiyat*, but I will still tell you." (Sabir)

For some *fermer*, even in the present conditions it is not as lucrative to be a *fermer* as they expected, but it is necessary and important to be a part of the system if and for as long as they can. Furthermore, some *fermer* who have good relations to the local government enjoy their status since they are included in the small elite circle, which gives them influence and through that other benefits. It is a part of the *fermer*' job to spend many hours with people of decision-making power, either in the *tuman* centre, in the *xokimiyat* or in other localities such as restaurants. Also, *fermer* who belong to this narrow circle get the chance to be updated and well prepared for coming regulations. Becoming a *fermer* allows them to have a better living standard or the other way around, a better living standard (which usually also implies broader social networks) allowed them to become a *fermer*. On the other hand, *fermer* often complain about their situation. One day the wife of a *fermer* was telling me

how unpleasant and difficult it is to be a *fermer*.

> "One of the kolkhozcu's children is sick, so he came to me and asked for money. My husband gave him 5.000 *sum*. What can we do? What should we do? If we are not paid, we cannot pay them either. Everybody thinks, if you are a *fermer* and fulfil the plan, that means you have money." (Iqbol)

The majority of people, however, agreed that worst is the situation of the (former) kolkhozcu who are now dependent on either the *shirkat* or a *fermer*.

> "The people who are really poor are the kolkhozcu. During the cotton season they collect cotton. During other periods, every two or three months, they get 2-3 thousand *sum*. The whole family works together, men, women and children. At the end of the picking season they will have picked, let's say five tons. For one kg, 20 *sum* is paid. That makes 100 thousand *sum*. He can buy cattle, goat or sheep with that money. ... It is hard for them, most of the time neither their 2000, 3000 or 4000 *sum* salary is actually paid, nor is there a place where they can claim it or ask for anything. If they do, it doesn't make a difference. A ten *sot* piece of land or the opportunity to pick cotton after the season ends is the only profit they make. The problem is that kolkhozcu do not get their official salaries or payments and they were not supposed to ask for it. Since they unofficially used the land of the *fermer* and the *shirkat* – state property - they could not and did not ask for their salary. What's forbidden, allowed or tolerated is entangled." (Nazim)

4.6 Consumption Patterns and Household Budgets

From the above, it is clear that it is quite difficult to calculate a family budget and display the income and the expenditures. An Uzbek social scientist, who was working in a research institute in Tashkent producing surveys for foreign institutions, confirmed my impressions and the difficulties of getting people to talk about the subject. If the official salaries are so low and the expenditures that high, then the significant part of a family's income originates from not registered work. He estimates that 80% of income is unofficially earned.

Expenditures are differentiated and planned in daily, monthly or on a more long-term basis. Money is spent on a daily basis in order to buy food, while clothing is a more seasonal or occasional (school, wedding) expenditure. The household diet is more or less planned and the food prepared is strongly de-

termined by agricultural products. However, one or the other ingredients may be missing or an unexpected guest may arrive and it becomes necessary for additional food products to be bought. Flour is the main diet product, especially for home baked bread and noodles. Tea, rice and meat are bought regularly while candies and biscuits are for special occasions and for guests. Vodka consumption is high during the weddings or circumcision feasts but also consumed at private gatherings such as birthdays or meetings amongst friends. It is not unusual for a bottle of vodka to be put aside for unexpected guests, or the children are sent to the village shop to buy one.

> "In the past, we did not know and did not really think about how much flour we consumed per month. It was cheap and abundant, and there was always enough. What we did not consume we used as fodder." (Azoda)

The two most important diet products, flour and meat, are also taken as a benchmark for inflation and the value of things. One kilo of meat was 2000 *sum* (or 1.5 $) in 2002 and a 50 kg sack of first quality local flour 12.000 *sum*. Rice is also one of the basic staple foods since it is the main ingredient for *plov*, the most prestigious meal that all families try to prepare at least once a week and whenever guests are around. Rice is produced primarily in the regions of Khorezm and Karakalpakistan, which are both particularly affected by the crises of the Aral Sea and the lack of sufficient water supply, but also in the Ferghana Valley.[18] The production has therefore decreased and prices have risen to 900-950 *sum* per kg. The price of rice is, like meat and flour, an important indicator for people to measure the overall economic situation.

As a traditional dish, *plov* is highly appreciated.[19] Preparation methods vary regionally and there exists a kind of *plov* competition within Uzbekistan. I was regularly asked how I liked the taste of *plov* in Bukhara, in the Valley or in Khorezm. Depending on the province, the taste as well as the visual reputation is different, depending on the seasoning with carrot, pepper and others. Karakalpakistan has an "aq paq" (white and, according to other Uzbeks, flavourless) *plov* while in the valley it is too "spicy", at least for Bukharians. *Plov* is also the main dish in any kind of ceremony or ritual (wedding, circumcision, mourning), for special guests and for all kinds of

[18] Rice from Özgen (Kyrgyzstan) is also highly appreciated.

[19] The term *plov* derives from Persian while in Uzbek the national dish is usually just called as *plov* (meal).

gatherings. Because of the high rice and meat prices many families prepare this dish only on certain occasions or only on weekends to compensate for the whole week's hardworking. How often people could afford *plov* was also taken as a measure of their standard of living, which sank drastically after 1991. "We could cook *plov* whenever we wanted" was one of the expressions used to describe the high living standards during the Soviet time. The type of rice used as well as the amount of meat added are also important indicators. For more on the subject, see Glenn & Surina (2005) and Zanca (1999, 2003, 2007).

In daily life, the basic diet is based on soup, sometimes served with stuffed vegetable pastries. Bread is always eaten and usually baked at home. Meat is expensive but a small fatty piece with bones accompanies every soup. Turnips, carrots, cabbage and potatoes are the other main ingredients. Tea is consumed everywhere, but different types are preferred regionally. While in Bukhara it is green tea, in the valley mostly black tea is consumed. I was told that the climatic conditions determine whether green or black tea is consumed, although I saw no decisive climatic difference in these two places. The explanation given was that black tea is not good for one's blood pressure and green tea is healthier in the summer heat of Bukhara. Cotton oil is the most commonly consumed one; it is cheap and easily available.[20] It is also popular, and alternatives like sunflower oil are more expensive and sold only in the bazaar and in shops. For breakfast, tea, bread, some homemade marmalade and left-over food from dinner is eaten. In the summer, tasty fruits are available and salads are made with tomatoes, onions and cucumber.

The following example shows how Amir uses his *tomorqa* for the needs of his seven-person household.[21] He estimates how much land to use for which crop and how much yield this will lend. Sometimes, depending on the market prices, he changes the amount meant for sale. He will then, making sure not to cause severe diet changes, sell more carrots for example and keep more potatoes in reserve. Depending on the prices, he consumes more or less of his own products. Amir uses 23 *sot* for wheat cultivation so the household's annual demand for flour is covered. This will get him 1.100-1.200 kg wheat, which in turn provides some 900 kg flour after grinding it in the neighbour's mill. twelve *sot* is used for vegetables: seven *sot* for carrots, three *sot* for

[20] It is often given as a compensation of salary by the *shirkat* or the *fermer*. Before it is ready to consume, it is heated and boiled with onions. After that, according to my host family, it is suitable for cooking.

[21] Four adults and three children aged ten to fifteen.

onions and two *sot* for potatoes. From seven *sot* land he gets 1,5 - 2 tons of carrots but lately there has not been enough water and the yield was less. He keeps ca. 250 kg carrots for his consumption and the rest is sold at the local market. From three *sot* used for onions he gets one ton and from that 200 kg is for his own consumption. From two *sot* of land he gets 400 kg potatoes, which is more than enough for his own need. Therefore, the rest is either sold or kept as seed potato for his household. Thus, everything is neatly planned but still allowing the necessary flexibility.

The current hardships are, again, compared to the previous period and described with a certain amount of caution, also to make it clear to me that they had had better days. This is, however, done without defending or naming the socialist system but rather the state they lived in. "In the past, during the Soviet period, it was better", is the expression. In contrast, the contemporary period is one of destitution. The way one interlocutor described the Uzbek currency shows how she valued it; "... the *sum* has a name but in itself it does not exist" (*sumun adi bor ozi yoq*).

> "During the Soviet time you could have a reasonably good life with 300 *sum*. Fine, with Karimov we have independence, order and peace but it is not enough, the salaries are not high enough. We work the entire month for a few kilos of meat and flour. Today, if I buy sugar, I cannot buy meat. I don't buy many cloths anyway. I do care more about food and spend money for this. We save on garments, if we do not have a salary. In one month five kg rice, five kg flour and five kg cotton oil is all you get. During the Soviet time I wore things once or twice and then gave them to the poor or to orphans, now I am in that same situation. I would like to have better clothes but I cannot afford them." (Yulduz)

I received a list of goods and how expensive they were in the past, before independence, and how much they cost today. Even then the kolkhozcu earned less than a driver in the past but it was enough for a decent life. Interestingly, people do not compare themselves to well-off people after independence. The living standards of the past are compared with the present, and not with other people of the same time.

Larger expenses are on life-cycle ceremonies, the construction of houses, higher education and specific medical treatments (operations). The most serious expenditures are life-cycle ceremonies. Weddings and circumcision parties with several hundred guests can easily add up to 1,000 $ or more. When set against the average incomes of $20, if even that, this appears to be an impos-

sible task and jokes about how Uzbeks manage to conduct ceremonies on such a small budget are common all over the country.

> "There is no other way, you must do it. If we could keep them small, it would be better but *üy* (houses) and *toi* (feasts) demolish us. Otherwise we could save some money to buy a car and enjoy it. If you get sick, if you need to go to the hospital, if you have a coming *toi*, or you need to build a house, these are the most important expenses, where do you get money for them? As a kolkhozcu, it is difficult." (Rustam)

Alisher was planning to start with the construction of a house in which his older son would move in after his wedding and for that reason he bought construction material bit by bit and put it aside. After he bought the construction material, he was planning on putting some money for Iskandar's higher education expenditures aside. For both these events, first studying and then marriage, his son has at least five to seven years before him. If he does not finish the house on time the married couple can live with them until a habitable part of their house is finished. After that, he also wants to renovate his own house, which was built in 1993 but looks much older. I was told that for a kolkhozcu the average cost of a house is approximately 1.5 million *sum*, the costs for houses of the chiefs have no upper limit. In contrast to ordinary workers they may also be able to build their house within a year.

> "Wood has become so expensive. During the Soviet time we got it from Russia, from Siberia. It was cheap, now it costs so much. I have to start buying it, because I cannot afford it all at once. First wood, later cement and so forth. Relatives help you and you can pay them back when you get some money, but until then you are abased." (Akram)

The wealth of families was not always restricted to their four walls and number of livestock in their barns. There were families whose houses and kitchen gardens gave the impression of tidiness, well maintained and of a reasonable standard of living. There were other families for whom it was not easy to know at first glance how affluent they are. Since land and space in the village are a problem, some investments are done outside of the house. It was also not unusual for some people, especially for high-level officials, to give their livestock to other people for care taking and grazing.

Investing money and time in the education is another major challenge but to do so for unknown job perspectives leads families, especially in the case of girls, to think twice. In the past, the cost of education was not one had to

worry about. After the demise of the Soviet Union, not only the tuition fees but also the living costs in the cities play an important role in this decision making process. There is also no guarantee of getting a job after finishing university and the salaries are not enough on which to survive. As mentioned, appropriation of practical skills is therefore seen as a better alternative to a university diploma, at least for girls. On the other hand, for most families who can afford it, a major wish is for a son to get a university degree. The study costs are not limited to the tuitions and living costs in the city but also include gifts or assisting the teaching stuff in other ways. Bahodir as a doctor and his brother as a pharmacy worker had easy access to medical resources. He provided the dean of the faculty, at which his son studies, with expensive and not easily available medicine, as the dean's father was sick. Since Bahodir did him this favour, the dean is now in debt to him and will help his son to get his diploma if there were to be any difficulties. Getting diplomas this way is not unusual and people talk frankly about it. Some people, however, expressed their concern that people have diplomas but nothing in their head.

> "You go somewhere and ask for a document, and the person tells you: write it yourself, I will put my signature and provide the stamp. Since they get diplomas with money, they do not learn anything. This was not the case during Soviet period." (Shukrat)

At the same time, I was told that bribes were a problem in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakstan and that because of that, the Uzbek government did not accept diplomas, e.g. from the Uzbek-Kyrgyz University in Osh. It is not seen as having any quality. The same person contradicted his earlier expressions about Kyrgyzstan and told me that he could not send his son to study in Tashkent since the director was not satisfied with 1000$.

In order to be able to finance all this, income and expenditures are closely calculated and planned in advance. Alisher's strategy was to plan and divide the larger necessary expenses overtime so that there would not be a huge burden at once. The amount of money needed for specific occasions was clearly defined. He decides and plans the costs, but often consults his parents. While his wife knows about the calculations, Alisher is the one actually making them and keeping an overview. He is equally proud of his household management skills, i.e. how much flour the family needs until the next harvest, when to start constructing the house and the like. Thus, long term planning became more important in the post-Soviet period. However, many families simply do

not have enough produce from the plots to sell larger surpluses. Most they consume by themselves or have to sell immediately since they need money for other needs. Others can afford to store onions or potatoes and sell them later when prices start to increase after the first post-harvest sale wave. This kind of thinking is seen as part of the market economy and many people say that they are in a learning process. The following "carrot story" was recollected to me as an example of this process.

> "A few years ago, carrots were expensive, the prices were high, then, a year later, we all put more land under carrot cultivation, and that year everybody had carrots and the prices fell." (Sharaf)

The most important place for selling produce is the farmer's bazaar, *dehqon bozori*. Most people try to sell and buy here. The market has different parts. All vegetable sellers are in one part, meat sellers in another, clothes vendors in yet another. You can find almost anything in the different corners of the market. Female dominance of both salespeople and buyers is not to be overseen in the market. Women also think they are better than men in that respect, a view commonly accepted. Bargaining, reconsidering and comparing prices is part of market life (Geertz 1978). For some goods people are regular customer of some sellers whose stall is exactly described and recommended. I was also told I should not go to another stall or avoid a particular one because of the price and the quality.[22] On big shopping occasions, families invest time and energy in order to get an overview about the prices and diversity of the goods. In pre-independence Ferghana Valley, before the borders became reality, the market's orientation was towards the city of Osh. This bazaar is not only close to the *tuman* but also long in existence and the biggest in southern Kyrgyzstan. Some people still cross the border to visit the market, but it is tedious and today the prices are higher in comparison to Uzbekistan.

In addition, in every village there are a few small shops, often located in private houses, that sell some foodstuff, clothing, sanitary products, sweets, soft-drinks and alcohol. Meat is also bought in small portions according to ones needs, either in the market or at the village butcher. Prices are higher here than in shops in Romitan or Bukhara, but most villagers cannot afford to go to town very often. Furthermore, unexpected guests often force one to buy some sweets or alcohol on the spot.

[22] Ethnicity was not a criterion in that respect. See Baykal (2007) on gender and ethnicity aspect in Samarqand.

In many regards the "shortage economy" (Kornai 1992) of the past has thus been replaced by a period of "un-affordability". The past is, however, not remembered as a shortage of garments but rather as a time of availability and affordability of goods. As consumers, the rural population had limited access to certain goods since some consumption goods were available only in the cities (and in special shops). Because of this, villagers perceive themselves as better prepared and adjusted to the present difficulties than the urban population, especially in the early years of independence with food shortages. Self-provisioning in rural areas was of course better than in urban settings. During the Soviet period people did not need to think about how and from where they would get their daily bread; its price, production costs and other issues were outside of their knowledge, thoughts and interest. The shortages of the past were not existential for daily life since the basic consumption needs were satisfied.

> "Indeed, throughout the former Soviet bloc, the postsocialist scenario highlights aspects of *socialist abundance*[23], not only of consumer goods no one wanted, but of sometimes lavish subsidies for food and drink; for cultural events, books, and vacations; for health and childcare services, and for basic utilities such as heat-making warm and cozy apartments in mid-winter Hungary." (Fehérváry 2009: 434)

I believe memories such as the ones of abundantly available white flour, which was even used to feed the livestock, shows what makes the Soviet time unforgettable and keeps it as a positive, lively memory in the minds of many people. Shortage or poor quality of goods in the past, in the Uzbekistan case, are not mentioned or may not be remembered so vividly as the markets of the present time are perceived as full of bad quality goods, which are furthermore unaffordable. The price and quality relation of something did not play an important role in the past since the replacement of a good was not a problem in respect to affordability. The significant criterion was its availability and the chance at having something different than standard socialist supply (see also Kuehnast 1998:641).

"Now we have things to buy but no money, during the Soviet time we had money but nothing to buy" was a frequent expression of this perception. The good quality of products, and especially of garments, during the Soviet period is very often mentioned in talks. Today, earning money and getting salaries

[23] Emphasis in original

in time is one problem, and the bad purchasing power of the *sum* is another problem. In the past the flow of objects – although within the closed socialist system – gave Uzbeks the feeling of being a part of a world system, much more so than today. In the present, there is a strong negative attitude particularly towards the garments, which are mostly in poor quality and produced in China, Iran and Turkey. This topic was very often mentioned and products of that time were shown and the memories told.

> "Look at this coat, which this child has, it was mine. It is German; GDR made. I used it for many years and now we tailored it to use as a coat for my grandchild. Do you see the quality? After so many years, it is still good." (Abror)

On the other hand, the creation of consumption incentives does not play an important role since Uzbeks' income, purchase power and consumption is not "the fulcrum of economic growth" (Livingston 1998:415: cited in Fehérváry 2009: 433). With its economic policy, the Uzbek state develops and determines the consumption possibilities of the average citizen and these goods are correspondingly available and in circulation in the market. With the existing incomes and purchase power of the money, Uzbeks cannot, in general, satisfy their consumer desires. People substitute their needs with available and affordable goods. This is no different than in Soviet times.

State socialism or planned economy is described by Kornai (1992) as an "economy of shortage". The present Uzbek economy is constructed similar so that it creates mainly a demand for poor quality goods. Corresponding to this demand, a dominance of "supply of poor quality" in the market can be seen. Again, no different than in Soviet times, what people buy in order to satisfy their basic needs is determined by the state. In that respect there is still no consumer power that could change the flow of quantity and quality of goods in the markets. For well-off people, mainly in urban areas, there are more options to gain access to garments of better quality than in the province.

The 'Shortage of quality' has another aspect to itself. After the demise of socialism, the opening of markets to international goods with "inferior quality" did not make Uzbeks a part of capitalist consumption world. As Fehérváry points out "... how objects come to be evaluated in terms of "quality" continues to be very much tied to cultural and historical contexts that include shifting economies" (2009: 444).

> "Emblematic goods of state socialist production as well as their settings came to be seen as evidence of the failure of a state-socialist-generated modernity, but more importantly, of the regime's negligent and even "inhumane" treatment of its subjects. In contrast, select commodities imported from the West (including socialist goods produced solely for export) were encountered as prized valuables and icons of a different world. The properties of these goods – designed, it seemed, to make life easier and pleasurable – were not just evidence of a better production system, but served as icons of a more humane political and economic system, a place where living a "normal" life was possible." (Fehérváry 2009: 429)

Today, no different than in the past, products, commodities or garments from other countries, not only from the West but also from Russia, get the same amount of enthusiasm. In that respect, this is a step back from the socialist generated modernity. Today, a garment from Russia gets the same attention that was special for western products in the past. Today, the socialist products have become "icons", "legends" and are perceived by many people as "valuable". Of course, there is a certain amount of *nostalgia* in this, but they are mainly missed because they were durable and affordable.

> "My shoes were made by Salamander. They are German. We got things from Bulgaria, Russia, the GDR. They were good and of high quality. Now, the market is full of Chinese goods; you pay a good amount of money and after a short time they are torn." (Akram)[24]

While Western products were seen as symbols of rebellion or symbols of being different in the socialist system, today in Uzbekistan, interestingly, garments started to lose this meaning and clothing became less meaningful "as an expressive medium" (McCracken 1988: 57). They do not send any message to the other side anymore because, given the limited options in the bazaar, people have become rather uniform in that respect. While women compare the quality of fabric and shoes to that of the Soviet era, men compare that of suits, shirts and shoes and boys that of shoes and t-shirts. McCracken argues that "...it is possible to undertake the study of change and history through clothing. ... clothing can be used as a historical operator which serves not

[24] Fehérváry's points out in her article (2009: 445) that: "Some goods of socialist production were noted for their quality and good design ..." She writes that during the socialist period in Hungary "...East Germany was known for, among other things, the quality of its toys - which were proudly displayed in the windows of the GDR cultural centre in downtown Budapest". Definitely rural Uzbekistan had less access to these products than urban dwellers but people did know about it.

only to reflect chancing historical circumstances but also as a device which creates and constitutes this change in cultural terms" (1988:61).

In daily life, clothes worn outside are completely separated from those worn inside. Anybody coming home from the public sphere immediately changes their clothes to house garments. When children come home from school, they are told, to "change your clothes". Again, when going to the fields they change their cloths and wear older ones. In the public sphere, having good and fashionable clothes is very important. An appropriately dressed man usually wears a suit and women a tailored dress. This is expected from men and women when they enter the public sphere and is seen as "civilized" (*madani*).

After my *iftar* visits or after weddings, when a crowd of people would take off their shoes in front of a door, it was almost impossible to differentiate them from all the other pairs, which were mostly all the same. There were so many red slippers or black galoshes in front of the door, that it was almost impossible to find one's own. Of the same slipper there were two different colours available to buy (red or blue), and the most preferred one was red. There are two different qualities of galoshes concerning the thickness of the plastic. The better (thicker) ones were the Russian (russkiy) produced ones and the cheaper ones were made in Iran (iranskiy). Nobody wants to go home again with the same but more worn out slippers. Under these circumstances there are only two possibilities for someone to find his or her own shoes or slippers again. Either, when a person takes off their shoes he or she puts them in a certain place or hides them in a corner with the hope of finding them again. The other possibility, which Azoda did for me after I bought russkiy galoshes at the market (they did the same for their russkiy galoshes), is to sew buttons on the front of the galoshes. Of course, many people did the same thing, but by using different buttons and sewing them on with different coloured threads at different places, this problem of "sameness" was solved with some creativity. If there were gatherings with large numbers of people, buttons or hiding the shoes was not always a successful strategy. A good solution to the problem was to wear old shoes since their loss would not be as expensive as that of a new pair.

Chapter 5

Social Strategies: Networks, Identity and Solidarity

5.1 Introduction

The described economic changes have forced people also to re-organise their social life. The withdrawal of the state from many spheres it had covered in socialist times has led to local communities and kin-based networks having to take over these functions. They provide the basis for relations of solidarity and reciprocity as two significant and central factors in the maintenance of social and community relations. In the post-Soviet period they help to ensure not only economic but also social and cultural survival.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the social relations and how they are lived in daily life. This covers many themes, from kinship, ethnic relations and neighbourhoods to rituals and feasts. It is necessary to first look at kinship and community relations and in that frame then try to understand ethnicity and its role in the different spheres of life in different regions. Kinship is an important and in fact the outstanding social category, which brings people together. In Bukhara in particular, kinship, neighbourhood and village community are almost overlapping. When I visited people, they would send me to their neighbours, who were treated as neighbours, only to find out they were kin.

But in the Uzbek case, kinship may often include other ethnic groups, namely Tajiks. As previously mentioned, both field sites are multi-ethnic. The residents were usually very proud of this and expressed themselves in that

manner to me. The peaceful co-existence of different ethnic groups for many years was seen on the one hand as an inheritance of the Soviet Union and on the other as the generosity of their own ethnic group. After independence some ethnic groups left the region for their respective states (Ukraine, Russia or Germany), yet some of them came back again and this was always seen as a symbol by the titular nations of how "hospitable" they are and that people appreciate this. Within the local settings, there are multiple combinations and generational jumps from one ethnic group to another: in the same generation, brothers, sisters and cousins can belong to different ethnic groups. Ethnic boundaries are remembered or forgotten in daily life according to the particular situation. If neighbouring households happen to be of a different ethnicity, this does not affect the willingness to provide help and support.

5.2 The Local Community

The key social unit is in fact the village. It is also, to some degree, a unit of solidarity and identity. Although they do not form endogamous entities, villages are the social environments for the individual's life cycle. They are not identical with kinship groups because all families also have ties to neighbouring villages. Rather, the village community is an institution in addition to kinship. All fellow villagers, irrespective of the existence of kin relations, will attend different types of ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals.

In both field sites, villages do not have a central place where people meet, sit and discuss things together. This is mostly done in front of house doors or in courtyards. The mosque is also no such meeting point, except for when people would pray together. Some villages in the Ferghana Valley have an area where several small shops form a kind of central place. This does not exist in Romitan. There is no drinking fountain as a possible meeting point either, which would especially concern women and children. Usually children are responsible for carrying water from the *ariq*, the small irrigation canals, which flow either through or on the upper side of the village and it was possible to get water from many different parts. *Ariq* are not only good for providing water for households for cleaning and cooking but they were also the places children could refresh themselves in the hot summer months.[1]

[1] Quite often I would see girls and boys playing and swimming in the canals together. While girls were only allowed to swim there up until 10 or 12 years old, boys were allowed

Villages have their own property for important social events, which take place in the village. This includes things such as cooking facilities, chairs and tables, benches and the like. These can also be borrowed from neighbouring villages if needed. In Bukhara, the mosque basement houses tables, benches and chairs and huge kettles (*kazan*), which the villagers commonly use during feasts or other occasions. A person from the village voluntarily takes responsibility of this common property. Villagers replace old or broken materials by contributing money.

As much as the village is a social unit, it also restricts interaction. This partially excludes some people from the social life of a village, especially in Bukhara. For instance, people whose houses are located on the outskirts of the village, where new land pieces are available, are affected by this. These people are invited to gatherings but the response is less enthusiastic.

> "It is such a long walk, it is too hot to walk that far; it is also dark, there are no lights when we go back and the roads are muddy". (Gulshad)

This has, of course, also to do with an understanding of living "far away". The issue of darkness and the mud are a fact, however, and relevant for the entire village. There are indeed only a few streetlights and the one paved road was the main street where much of the pavement does not exist anymore. More generally, contact outside of the village – or anything in walking distance – is rather limited. This occurs, for example, when there is a wedding in the neighbouring village. People go to the '*tuman*' (Romitan) or the 'city' (Bukhara) only on certain occasions. People employed by the village administration or kolkhoz have more intensive contacts to the *tuman* and are called in for accounting, for documents, for gatherings about new laws or for fulfilling a cotton plan. There are also a few people living in the village who work in the *tuman*, while there is nobody known to me working in the provincial capital in the both field sites. For some families, visiting Bukhara a few times a year involves sightseeing and shopping, sitting in a *chayxona* (teahouse) and eating shashlik, and it is a chance to see something other than the village. This is especially relevant for children and female members of the family. The Soviet generation had the chance to enjoy this kind of activity as members of *pioneer* or *komsomol*[2], much more than the post-independence generation. The

to enjoy it longer.

[2] *Komsomol* was the youth organisation of the Communist party of the Soviet Union starting from age of 14, following the pioneer stage starting from age 10.

tuman centre is not a place to go for this purpose; for villagers, it is strongly associated with *xokimiyat* and bureaucracy. The city is seen as more pleasant and relaxing and as something special. Other occasions for going to the city are either weddings or funerals of relatives, even when there was little contact to them. The workload, lack of time and costs of going there make these visits a rare and special occasion.

This lack of mobility in Bukhara stands in sharp contrast to the valley where people and goods move beyond the border. In the valley, similar to Bukhara, the villages are also merged together and the main street, leading to the *tuman*, passes through the villages where houses are located on both sides of the road and in the hinterland. However, different than in Bukhara, where villages are isolated by side roads, travel is made easier due to the main road. Transport possibilities are provided through microbuses, which regularly travel between settlements. Travelling back and forth is expensive, however, and people usually have to have a good reason to travel.

Beyond the village, the next larger unit is the former kolkhoz or *shirkat*. Parallel to that the other major institution is the *selsoviet*, the *kishlok fukarolar yigini*. In parts of Uzbekistan the *shirkat* as an economic unit often corresponds to another administrative entity, the *mahalla* or neighbourhood. As a residential unit, the *mahalla* is a very often brought-up subject in post-socialist Uzbekistan. Traditionally it was a primarily urban institution later adopted by the Soviet state that regulated both residence and social conduct within cities. Today, the *mahalla* is a governmental structure as well as an informal institution. It can be interpreted both as a return to pre-Soviet institutions and also as an attempt in the post-socialist nation-state to tighten control over its citizens (Abramson 1998; Koroteyeva and Makarova 1998; Massicard and Trevisani 2000; Petric 2002; Geiss 2001; Sievers 2002).

I was very often asked if in Turkey or in Germany there are also *mahalla* and if they have the same structure and similar duties. The role and strength of *mahalla*, however, differed remarkably within Uzbekistan. In Bukhara *viloyat*, it was not an institution recognizable in daily life and one did not notice its existence while in the valley it was not possible to overlook or ignore it. I recounted to villagers in Bukhara how strong the *mahalla* is in other parts of the country, particularly in the valley, and some people argued that it could be good to solve the problems at the *mahalla* level before the *tuman* interferes. It was astounding that *mahalla*, which is so strongly identified with Uzbek-

istan and generalized for the whole country, did not really have any meaning for the people in Bukhara. While "our village" and "our kolkhoz" were the reference points in Bukhara, in Ferghana "our *mahalla*" was used in everyday discourse when addressing the local community and administration. Abramzon describes the importance of *mahalla* not only as an "important form of community identification but also as a social organization" in Qoqand (1998:5). In the Marxamat setting there were eleven *mahalla* fukarolar yighini that formed two *shirkat*, namely Paxtakor and Mashal.

All residential units not only strongly overlap with kin relations in rural areas but also serve as administrative entities to consolidate political control and supervision. The *tuman* governor and the *mahalla* committee work so closely with each other that Sievers describes the latter as 'grassroots state agencies' (2002: 143). Positions in the *mahalla* committee are filled by *tuman* authorities and administrations. In the valley, the *mahalla* has a *rais* (chief), a *katib* (clerk) and a *mahalla postpon*. The *postpon* has, according the *rais*, existed in the valley since March 1999. He is responsible for the order and control of the village. All together they build the *mahalla* committee, which during my stay got a new fourth member, the "*terbiyeci*" or educator. These were the people who had a salary.

Below that were the *mahalla aqsaqali* (*mahalla* elders) and *kucha aqsaqali* (street elders). The latter emerged only after independence along with the *mahalla postpon* and is responsible for everything happening in his sector. These were also people who worked in the *mahalla* but did not get any salary. As the other village personnel they were usually found sitting and spending their time in the *selsoviet*. The *aqsaqal* are elected for 2,5 years and again the *tuman* nominates the candidate. A *meclis* (council) representing the *mahalla* and its members then elect the *aqsaqal*. There is also a supervising committee, which is elected from the *meclis*. When the *rais* leaves, all personnel who worked with him also quit. In Bukhara, the *aqsaqal* was called as village *aqsaqal* and was not part of any hierarchical *mahalla* organisation.

The main duty of the *mahalla* committee is responsible as a first instance for official documents and applications no matter what the occasion. *Mahalla aqsaqal* must have some specific characteristics enabling him to succeed in his job. He must be somebody who knows how to talk to people, to make people do what he says and thus be somebody well respected in the village. According to villagers, President Karimov likes the *mahalla aqsaqal* since he is responsible

for "*tertip*" (law and order) at the bottom, where it should begin, and he is also a helper for people who are in hardship or neediness. His social competence is very important but also his own family must be intact, and people must be able to go and ask advice. His responsibilities vary from intervention and mediation of family quarrels, coordination of people for cleaning up the streets to the controlling of wedding feasts. If he cannot solve the problem in his street, he asks for help from the *mahalla aqsaqal* or the *selsoviet*.

The main duty of the *postpon* is the keeping of public order by controlling the documents of unknown people and questioning them about their purpose of stay in the *mahalla*. They are unarmed but militarily dressed. "The last time an unknown person was in the *mahalla* he wanted to sell honey here. Our *postpon* asked him to show his passport, everything was alright and he was allowed to sell". Actually, by asking for and checking ones passport, the *postpon* does not get very much information but it demonstrates the power and control mechanisms of the state, and also its presence. These positions can be summed up under "law and order" and represents the first instance of state surveillance at the local level. The presence of the state, using traditional institutions at a local level, varied. Its presence is not only guaranteed by the *postpon* but also by the *aqsaqal*. In the end, depending on the problems or wishes of the villagers, the *aqsaqal* is also the person who goes and talks to the *selsoviet* or to the *tuman*. Most of the time, nobody in the *xokimiyat* shows enough patience, interest or respect to ordinary citizens and their different types of problems. That is why *mahalla aqsaqal* has a kind of double role, as well as a burden, moderating between residents and state authorities. His deputies, the *kucha aqsaqal*, do not necessarily have the same features he does.

Providing poor families with food and other things is also responsibility of the *mahalla* committee.

> "Since 1997, we have helped poor families. During the Soviet period, nobody ever asked who was poor and who was rich. The person in the committee who was responsible for finance knows who is poor and who isn't. Nowadays, our *rais* talks to the *mahalla* committee; in my *mahalla* I have a needy family and soon they have a *toi*. They need help. I have to look around, who can donate a sheep or some rice. The *rais* asks the kolkhoz for cotton oil, he finds out who can provide a car for driving the couple to the *tuman* for the niqah. If somebody well off does not provide his car, the militsiya does not allow him to drive at all in the next few days. If the *rais* does not get enough support he can isolate the people from the village community. People respect the *mahalla aqsaqal*, what

he says must be done." (Azim)

Surely, the Uzbek government treats the *mahalla* as part of its "Uzbekisation"-program following independence. The ideas about *mahalla* and its place in the Uzbek culture and identity is also stressed in written form on walls or panels and signed with the president's name.[3] Aphorisms, which praise the *mahalla* as an ideal way of living and which state that "without *mahalla* a person is not a person", are written on walls and signboards dominating the landscape. The *mahalla* is thus also an institution proudly presented to others in order to show the solidarity and support among its residents. It is a model of the strength of the Uzbek culture which cares for others and whose residents pool resources for different purposes and cherish the peace starting at the micro level. While most Uzbeks are quite proud of having *mahalla*, yet there are exceptions. Some people argue that there is no need for a *mahalla* committee, since "they just take their money and do nothing". But what are the expectations? It seems to be more about the power concerning the institution. As Abrahamson also put it, " [M]ore power to the *mahalla* committees really means more power to centralized bodies" (1998: 207). The following words by a *mahalla rais* show his opinion of himself and also of his power:

> "I say: in this *mahalla*, I am Karimov. I am the Karimov of this *mahalla*. I have worked eleven years and put the residents in form and order." (Zafar)

Lately, the *mahalla* committee has increasingly controlled public order in a "civil way" using social means such as isolation or discrimination. As an extended arm of the state but without the coercive powers used by the militsiya, the state can, in the framework of traditional Uzbek values, breath down people's necks. According to some people, this was perceived as proof of "how caring the state is for its citizens". Others interpreted it as "how the state restricts people and fails to work in other spheres, where it would actually be necessary", such as through providing infrastructure, transportation and the freedom to celebrate as long as one wants. I was also told that the *mahalla* committee occasionally checks the cleanliness of some houses. In the springtime, the *mahalla* starts to clean the canals, streets and flowers planted in front of people's houses. There were contests between *mahalla* or within the *mahalla* for the cleanest streets and most beautiful front gardens of the houses.

[3] 2003 was designated the „Year of *Mahalla*" by President Karimov.

The winner is then awarded an extra budget. I was told this has started since independence and that during the Soviet period these things were not taken into consideration. These contests contribute to a strengthening of local identity at the *mahalla* or village level, which continues with the *tuman* and the *viloyat* and beyond, in the case of the Ferghana Valley.

The common identity of being a Bukharian is of similar outstanding importance and brings residents of the *viloyat* together in some way. At other levels the difference between two villages, for example Chilongu and Fayzi Kurbonov, is also clearly expressed in everyday life and has its implications, e.g. concerning marriage. Equally, the distinction between (*tuman*) like *vobkentsha*, *gizhduvansha* or *romitansha* ("the way we do it here in Vobkent, Gizhudvan or Romitan" respectively) can, depending on the occasion, be significant. This is even more the case with the "Turkmen" districts of Olot and Karakul in the southern part of Bukhara *viloyat*. But none of these come anywhere near to having the meaning that the boundaries between oases have. The Bukharian way encompasses all of the most important elements of what is considered appropriate. Within this there may be differences, but these re-enforce rather than threaten the common identity. It is more like the various members of one family who all contribute to its distinctiveness from other families.

Out of all the other oases or provinces in Uzbekistan, the only one that can be considered reasonably close to Bukhara is Samarqand. Still, the difference is tremendous and it would be impossible, it is said, to make Samarqandians adapt to family life in a Bukharian village. The same is apparently true the other way round. Students from Bukhara studying in Samarqand meet each other rather quickly and do things together such as cooking, travelling home and finding partners. When I asked a couple from Bukhara, who were originally from different villages, how they met, they answered that:

> "In Samarqand, he studied veterinary science and I studied medicine. Relatively quickly everybody from Bukhara found each other and we established our own community there. My husband also went back to Bukhara on weekends and, like everybody else, we got to know and like each other on the bus rides home and then married. Our first daughter was born in Samarqand. If you are from Bukhara and in the Bukharian community, the latter will take care of you. We are from the same *tuman* and travelled the entire way together. Others from other *tuman* had their own groups." (Sharifa)

This importance of locality and its continuous mentioning in different con-

texts was not unusual at all. When I returned to Bukhara from Tashkent or from the Ferghana Valley, I was always questioned about how the food, in particular the *plov*, was and if people there were as "*mexmandost*" (hospitable) as in Bukhara. However, the answer was also directly given. "It cannot be possible, they do not invite you to eat by repeatedly saying 'olin, olin' (take, take). They bring *non* (bread) but do not break it into pieces (*sindirmeydi*).[4] And what about the taste of fruits? Nowhere are they as sweet as here. It's not possible, they have less sun, so they are less sweet." Other arguments had less with ecology but with human greediness to do. "Did you ever try *somsa* (stuffed dough with onions and meat) in Samarqand? They cheat you; they put almost no meat but fill it with fat and onions. You need reading glasses in order to find a piece of meat. It is expensive and when they sell it, they tell you how good and famous their *somsa* is. In Bukhara, we in Bukhara don't do like that."

The significance of locality as an identity marker within Uzbekistan is also regularly defined and mentioned through food and its preparation. According to Mintz and Du Bois, if ethnicity is based on difference and contrast, an ethnic cuisine is also related to "a geographically and/or historically defined eating community" such as nationhood or ethnicity. "[O]nce imagined, such cuisines provide added concreteness to the idea of national and ethnic identity" (2002:109). In the case of Uzbekistan this is more about locality and may then unite various groups against their co-ethnics somewhere else. How and how much food is offered to guests as a symbol of being "civilized" and "hospitable" is defining.[5] Food and food consumption is very often used as a measurement of social and economic change, and also as "social construction of the memory" about the Soviet period.

Actually, mostly men tell stories about food. They, more so than women, made their own experiences abroad, especially during the Soviet time while serving in the Russian army or while going to other parts of Uzbekistan for occasions on *komandirovka* (business trip).

> "In the army, I was in the Ukraine and there was a person from the valley with me, he cooked *plov* once, but it was so hot, I could not eat

[4] This is interpreted as a symbol of the host's generosity and cordiality. In particular, people in western Uzbekistan, in Khorezm and Karakalpakistan, are blamed for not breaking the bread.

[5] Here again, the (former) nomadic-sedentary dichotomy is of particular relevance and Kazaks or Kyrgyz are seen as „meat" consumers, not being able to cook properly.

> it. And once I visited a friend of mine whom I knew from my student time in Samarqand. He cooked for us, but it was distasteful, he mixed the carrots with rice, we do not do like that. Although we have hardships like the soil being salty and having not enough water, we have tasteful food and sweet fruits. In the valley they put so much red pepper in *plov* that you can not eat it. Could you eat it?" (Ismoil)

These were frequent comments made by people. They were directed against all other places within Uzbekistan but usually the Ferghana Valley is conceptualized as a particular contrast. In the valley, to the contrast, quite distinct issues were believed to be of prime importance when judging various provinces:

> "In the valley, we have many educated people. Other places are not as civilized as we are (*madaniyatlari pas*); they are crude. Doors are always open in our place, we greet unknown people, we ask about people. This is the way we do things." (Nazim)

5.3 Kinship and Marriage

Besides common locality, kinship is the major issue in Uzbek society but understanding who was related to whom was relatively bizarre and confusing. After my first interviews and visits to the village in Bukhara, I started to see the same people in different households again and again. They were not guests, as I was, but were coming and going as they pleased and doing household things. In the beginning I did not understand who belonged to which household and had which ties. When I mentioned that "I saw the same people in different households and I did not know that they were relatives", I was told, "Yes, they are". When I asked in which way or how close, the answer was "oh, from here, from there, close or far, they are relatives". "And exactly how?" "You see, my sister got married to a relative of theirs and we are also related to them via my mother's aunt." In the end, the entire village was more or less related to each other and I was prepared for the next time when I again see the same faces in different houses. Sometimes, when Alisher provided examples like "look, he is a relative of us", even his children were completely surprised.

Anthropological literature describes Uzbek kinship as inherently patrilineal. In fact, while men have clearly a privileged position in society and inherit most of the property of a family, kin networks include relatives from both sides similarly. This is reflected in terminology, which is more of a bilateral type. Thus, different kinds of cousins as well as other collaterals form equally part

of the kin network. As such they are approached for help during weddings and on similar circumstances. As marriage is usually arranged within close physical distance most relatives also live close by, no matter if the relationship is patrilateral or matrilateral.

The terms, which are used, for kinship are *avlod* and *karindosh* . They are occasionally used interchangeably and following and figuring out when which term is used was not easy. When I asked who a person was, the answer was in most cases "*karindosh* ". "Why not *avlod* ? "Well, she is also *avlod* ". "So, what is the difference?" "There is no difference". "But you use them differently?" Alisher was then, as always when the rest of the family could not help, called for help. "Alisher, you can explain the difference between *avlod* and karindosh to her." However, when Alisher was trying to explain the two terms, others would disagree about who belonged to which category and if there was in fact a difference. While the term(s) for "kin" are flexible and not selective along paternal and maternal lines, the knowledge concerning genealogy was quite weak. Most people only knew two generations back and were not able to name any ancestors beyond their grandfather. Vertical knowledge was weaker than horizontal one. In that respect there was also no difference between Tajiks and Uzbek who also share much of the basic terms or use them indiscriminately.

Settlement patterns reflect kinship relations quite closely both in Bukhara and in the Ferghana Valley. It is a must that one builds houses for ones sons, except the youngest one who inherits the house of the parents and also takes care of them until their death. In the past, new houses were constructed near the parents' house and daughters would move into the houses of their husbands. The aim is to keep sons as close as possible. The same is true for girls but the planning procedure is not made with the same effort as the sons. If a girl marries, it is wishful that she not only remains in the village but also moves in to a house as close as possible to her parents. This desired settlement pattern is, however, not always possible anymore; there is simply not enough space left. If an old house is destroyed and a new one constructed, it may be possible to build a new one for two families, but new settlement areas are only available on the outskirts of the village. The youngest son stays within the village, where there is also a better infrastructure than the new settlement areas.

In everyday life, the family is the basic production and consumption unit and after independence it became even more important in many respects. The

family size and the household composition actually did not change radically after the end of socialism but only until substantial migration from Central Asia started to take place in the last couple of years. For that reason, child and woman labour became more intensively used and regularly allocated as "help" by close kin. Families started to unify more and more and the conjugal independence of new married couples was often postponed for unlimited time due to economic reasons or for lack of construction land. The middle generation started to spend more time away from home in order to make ends meet while grandchildren were supervised by their grandparents or other relatives.

The extended family also plays an important role in the daily life of Uzbeks. This usually includes all descendants of one couple that are two generations away, i.e. all siblings and paternal first cousins. These will tend to meet very frequently; on an almost daily basis if they live in the same or neighbouring villages. There is, of course, certain variability to that and some families have closer mutual relations than others. Extended families do not always form one household but if possible, they tend to settle very close. However, relations are not always smooth.

When the household consists of an extended family, this is as indicated usually the youngest son residing with his family in his father's house, which he is later inheriting. This arrangement provides more advantages than in the past. Being married to the youngest son of the family, which means living with in-laws, used to be not very attractive for many girls in the past. But after independence, the families of brides started to see this marriage in a more positive light and did not see it as necessarily being accompanied by disadvantages. The pensions of elderly people, although not very much, are seen as positive as is having a house and piece of land. There are also examples of the youngest son moving out and the parents staying with another son. This decision depends not only on the relation to the son but the daughter-in-law also plays a very important role. In one case in the valley, the daughter-in-law mentioned that her in-laws like her and so they have decided to stay with them – this even though she was a Tajik and married into an Uzbek family. Her mother-in-law does not allow her to speak in her mother tongue to the kids because "the children should learn Uzbek properly".

There is a pronounced division of labour in Uzbek society. Domestic affairs are almost solely in the hands of women who do all the cooking, washing and cleaning at home (cf. Sancak & Finke 2007). In daily life, it is always women

who cook. Men only take on this responsibility at ceremonies and on other bigger occasions. As soon as daughters reach the age of fifteen, a major part of this work is on their shoulders. This only changes when their first brother gets married and the daughter-in-law will take on this job. Girls will assist their mother in this from an early age on and take over much of the responsibility later.

This imbalance survived the attempt during socialist times to promote gender equality. Concerning jobs, women are more present in education and health care, while men tend to occupy senior positions. In particular, many women have become teachers but, again, the director is usually a man. The same is true for female nurses versus male doctors. In the local administration women find a job mainly as secretaries. There are some exceptions to this. The head of one of the eight municipalities in Romitan *tumani* was a woman during the period of my fieldwork. Technical jobs like drivers or mechanics are also very much male dominated. In agriculture, women do most of the boring and exhausting work, such as ridding the fields of weeds and picking cotton.

Within the family, men take a clearly pronounced position. The eldest male is considered the head of the household and has the final word in most issues. Women, especially elderly women, however, have quite an influence on social affairs. This became clear when I discussed marriage arrangements but it extends to other spheres as well. Women are responsible for maintaining social relations to a large degree. Men are primarily responsible for presenting the family to the outside world. Thus they are in centre of all kinds of public events, mosque visits or other village-centred occasions.

> "Out of nine children, only two, my husband and his brother (one is doctor the other one is pharmacist), assure their existence. We support my mother and father-in-law. If we move to the city of Andijon they would die of hunger. They do not let us go to Andijon. The other sons can take care for themselves, but have no money left over. They exploit us and always say they need this or that. They say they don't even have enough oil (cotton oil). I threatened them that I would take my husband and move to Andijon." (Malika)

Malika can talk like this because her husband is the oldest son, thus she is the oldest daughter-in-law, and she is aware of her position via her husband – socially and economically. She comes from another *tuman*, is educated, and also works as a doctor, which allows her to speak more freely to her mother-in-law. Her father-in-law is sick and old, which may contribute to the fact

that she showed less reluctance to say her opinion but also she is known and accepted with her attitude.

Independence and the ongoing economic transformation have had a remarkable effect on gender and generation relations. Not only has the workload for women and men changed, but family members have become more separated from home. This has increased especially in the last few years since international migration has become to play an important role in the lives of people. It is particularly true for the Ferghana Valley. Both women and men have started to work more and harder at home and away from home. Besides their salaries being dependent on their occupation, going to *tomorqa* or buying and selling things at the market take up their whole time. Men and women have started to make their livings not only through an intensive use of their small plots but also by doing any kind of daily job as labourers. The number of women spending their days at the markets, either selling their own products or as small-scale traders, are an example for that. During these hours the grandparents take over household activities and child caring. Also, cooking, cleaning or other domestic work is done partially by the grandparents allowing young couples to do more additional activities beyond the household or village. While elders consolidate their position at home, women enjoy more respect from their in-laws in their labour-intensive activities.

For young men, after finishing school, there is nothing to do besides help their parents and hang out with their friends. This is seen as a major problem, especially by the older generation. For them it is a new and dangerous phenomena, and it is difficult to understand how somebody without a job can spend his life on the street and be engaged in bad habits such as visiting weddings uninvited and drinking in public. The older generation, which is now retired, never experienced unemployment in their youth at all.

Birth control and other necessary resources are provided by medical points (*ambulatorya*). Non-hormonal IUD was the most common method of preventing pregnancy and was available free of charge. For some informants, having less children is a sign of development but the dominant arguments are economic and concerning the health conditions of women. That is also why having many children nowadays is seen as a burden. This is a very ambiguous question. On the one hand, one son and one daughter is seen as an ideal case, and having many children raises the question of who will take care of them. On the other hand, having more children than two is explained with “we Uzbeks, we love

children". Sons are security for old age and stay with their parents to take care of them. Having at least one son is therefore a must and families with only daughters pity themselves:

> "Sons; we need at least one son, otherwise who will take care of us. If it is the case, we take an *ich kuyew* ("internal son-in-law"). Thus, a son-in-law moves to our house. This is not very good but what else shall we do?" (Zaynab)

Marriage is probably the most crucial social event in Uzbek society. It creates not only new households (although not immediately) but also links families in often multiple ways. Many couples are already linked to each other before their marriages. Marrying a relative strengthens the existing ties even more. Marriage in Uzbekistan is not just an issue between two individuals but one closely followed by their relatives. The decision of whom to marry is in most cases to a large degree also a family affair. In the case of men they may ask their parents (especially their mother) to help them marry a particular girl. Otherwise, it is often the parents to look for appropriate marriage partners for their kids. In the villages there were several cases of young people committing suicide because they were not allow marrying the person they wanted to. Most people marry sometime between 18 and 22 and girls beyond that age are considered difficult to marry of.

Criteria for choosing one's child's spouse include physical closeness (preferable within the same village or a few kilometres away) and a good reputation of the family. These two aspects often speak for relatives who usually settle within the same local area and know each other's positive and negative sides best. Zaynab's one daughter, who married a far off relative in a suburb of Bukhara, was very often a topic of conversation concerning how far away she is and how difficult it is, although her in-laws are a very good family and she is doing fine with her life. When we would talk about marriage, a good son-in-law, traditions and so on, I was waiting to be asked how I could marry a non-Muslim or, expectedly, if he had converted to Islam, or about how my parents allowed me to marry a non-Turk? However, this question was never asked. The only thing asked was how I could marry somebody from so far away and "how they could allow this".

Kin marriages are preferred not only because wealth stays in the family but for a multitude of reasons. Some of these have become even more important after independence. "Because of economic reasons people prefer to marry their

kin. Even if you give only 20 *koylek* (dresses), it is excused and more is not demanded due to the idea that kin should help kin. Of course, if you marry a non-kin, the children are healthier and prettier." Marrying a close relative was strongly preferred and very often justified using the following argument: "It is allowed in *musulmanchilik* (the Muslim way), in order to keep the closeness among kin." A Tajik family in Marxamat, with twelve children – five boys and seven girls – told me that all their marriage were kin-based.

> "Our daughters-in-law are all good girls. We have known them since childhood; they are not unknown (*begona*). Our grandchildren are healthy. All our sons-in-laws are also, in some way, kin to us. You know if you marry your kin, you have fewer breakups and a person has good manners. It is our tradition and we do not want to violate our tradition. We do not have inherited diseases that could lead to children with disorders. Children of an unhealthy father and mother are handicapped, in order to prevent it, they are doing propaganda with *saglom avlod*".[6] (Zoya)

Muxammad did not feel himself affected by this problematic at all and he argued that the state takes the necessary steps in order to prevent children from having disorders. There is no reason to avoid marrying kin. He continued to say that, "... now, before marriage they (the couple) go to the *tuman* for medical examination. If there is something wrong, they tell them there that "before marriage you need treatment" and then they are allowed to marry. During the Soviet time this did not happen".

In contras, especially people with a medical education adopted the official critique of kin-marriages. Malika said that all four of her husband's brothers married "outside" since her husband, like herself a doctor, insisted on it due to the high risk of retarded or sick children through kin marriages. She told me that Tajiks, as her in-laws, prefer kin marriages to others. In that respect she praised Kyrgyz's and Kazaks since they do not marry a kin from the last seven generations, like Amir Timur who also knew his seven generations. Now, she said, "... only two generations are known". Others were sceptical of kin marriages as a danger for affinal relations:

> "My older sister wanted her son to marry my daughter. I replied that if there are problems in their marriage, something doesn't work, if they quarrel all the time, if they want to divorce, what are we going to do? I told her that then we would not be able to talk to each other anymore.

[6] Literally: „healthy generation". After independence, this was one of the state programs that were dedicated to a subject focussing on particular aspects of life.

> Later my sister told me that: "You did well, you were right, we took the daughter of my husband's sister and give to our daughter to their son. Now two families – two hearts, two souls are happy." (Faruza)

Once negotiations are settled, preparations for the marriage procedures begin. Usually, these take place in summer. People get a break from labour-intensive agricultural work. Some of the most labour-intensive months are left behind, others coming up (starting from end of august cotton will be picked) making the summer the best time to organize feasts. Other important factors for choosing the summer include the weather – it is warm, less rain, the days are longer so the ceremonies can last longer – as well as the fact that the fruits are ripe and abundant.

Nice weather also allows for sitting outside, where tables and chairs are placed in a row. The tables are decorated with different fresh and dried fruits and soft drinks, while dishes are served one after the other, starting with soup and finishing with *plov*. The abundance of food and drink depend on how well off the family is. Weddings are expensive and most families have to save money for several years. On an average wedding party some 300 and 400 guests have to be fed and served with vodka. This may easily add up to 1,000 dollars. With an average salary of ten to 20 dollars (if there is a regular income at all) this is hard to match. Weddings are the most expensive feast but a *sunnet toi* of a rich family may be as costly. In a village in Bukhara a well off businessman had arranged for a famous singer and dancers from Tashkent to come to the *sunnet toi* of his only son. The amount of food and drink also corresponded to the expectations and to his status.

After a wedding *toi* people talk about every detail of the event and about the failures of the organization and its host. The amount of meat in *plov*, the number of bottles on the table, how long they had to wait to be served, how big or small the portions were and whether or not there was an adequate supply of beverages. During my stay in Bukhara, a wedding *toi* (*kiz* or girls *toi*) was celebrated with a circumcision (sunnet or boys *toi*) at the same time and I was also among the guests invited. With an un-approving tone I was told that it was as a "new tradition" to celebrate these two *toi* together.

> "It is a shame on the bride's family that the groom's family covered the entire costs of the wedding *toi*, especially since the bride's family celebrated their *sunnet toi* using that money. At the expenses of the wedding *toi* they celebrated their *sunnet toi*." (Gulnoza)

I had heard before about this co-celebration and about the reason some rituals are celebrated due to economic reasons. The *toi* was quite crowded, almost 600 hundred people came. I think one of the reasons why people were so critical had to do with the fact that it was a 'Turkmen' *toi*. People criticized the service, food and all other things using the argument that "... they did not take good care of the guests, there was no order, neither the service nor the food was good. Turkmens have no order." It was admitted, however, that the economic situation and the difficulties in the post-independence period bring changes to traditions as in case of celebration of ceremonies and performance of the rituals that is seen as inevitable.

While it is rare, some wedding feasts are celebrated during the winter. Most of the time this is due to marriage arrangements being worked out lately or because they are short of financial resources. I was told that some people are so busy that they have neither enough time to find a girl nor to organize the necessary preparations. Especially families with limited financial resources are forced to postpone or reschedule their planned marriages. In the case of a poor family, it takes more time and energy to convince the family of the girl, even if they are relatives. A well-off family seldom has these kinds of problems. In the valley for example, if the families work in Kyrgyzstan most of the time, then they face payments delays, or they are dependent on the happenings of the Kyrgyz free market economy. If payments are made and enough money is gathered, people are urged not to wait until summer for the wedding because their money may lose its value by then.

5.4 Ethnic Identity and Inter-ethnic Relations

It may be useful to differentiate ethnic groups according to their time of residence or how they have come to be in the region. This distinguishes more indigenous groups from relatively newcomers such as Russians or Tatars. Most of the non-Muslim populations either live in the cities or in the *tuman* centres, while the villages are dominantly inhabited by Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz or Kazaks. These groups have been residing here for a long time and only since 1991 became effectively separated by the border from their co-ethnics. The ethnic heterogeneity is affected by the local conditions and circumstances such as borders and historical movements.

As mentioned, the *viloyat* of Bukhara has a dominant Tajik population

while Uzbeks and, to a certain extent, other ethnic groups are represented as well. The Tajik speaking population shapes the entire city of Bukhara and many of the nearby districts. Some Turkmen villages are scattered throughout the *viloyat* and there is also a number of Kazaks but they live in the desert in small settlements where they form the majority. Furthermore, in the past few years, they have started to move to Kazakstan, where they have kept marriage relations throughout the years. From Bukhara towards the Western provinces of Khorezm and Karakalpakistan, the number of Tajiks diminishes radically (cf. also Finke 2006).

In the villages the number of Russians was never noteworthy. Mostly, they were teachers who came and stayed only a few years before they came to be increasingly replaced by locals. Occasionally there were some bureaucrats who came for education and training in kolkhozes and then also left after a certain amount of time. Interaction with them was limited to the work place, although they were sometimes invited to feasts. Today, the number of Russians or other non-Muslim ethnic groups is limited to the *tuman* centres and they are hardly ever seen in the villages. As mentioned earlier, there are a few rare exceptions of elder couples who met each other in Russia during military service.

In *tuman* centres there are also some Armenians, Tatars, Azeri, Meskhetian Turks or other groups who during Soviet times arrived as labour power or were deported by Stalin (Hirsch 2005, Martin 2001, Slezkine 1994). Some of them left after 1991 yet some of them, for example the Meskhetian Turks, stayed since they did not have an independent state to which to go back. The happenings in the Ferghana Valley in 1989 when violent conflict between Meskhetian Turks and Uzbeks broke out caused loss of life for both sides. After that, some Meskhetian Turks were again forced to leave, but some remained in the Ferghana Valley.

While no such thing exists in Bukhara, the Uzbeks in the valley are divided into sub-categories. Some of these are along (former) tribal lines such as Qipchaq and Turks. They were sometimes regarded as Uzbeks but sometimes counted as separate groups. In daily life, in Marxamat, usually the distinction was about Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and Turks. If the Turks were counted separately, they had a ranking after Uzbeks and Tajiks, which were again seen as close to each other. Turks were sometimes just Uzbeks, but they were again differentiated by some features such as their dialect, occupational status (as former livestock breeders) and physical features like having a slightly darker

skin. They rarely allow their daughters to marry Tajiks.

Another category in the Ferghana Valley is Kashgarlik. Muslims from Xinjiang immigrated to the valley during the nineteenth century when Qing authorities suppressed Muslim rebellions. According to Komatsu, Russian sources mention about 70,000 Muslim families from Kashgaria who migrated to the valley; most of them went back after the peace agreement (2007). But many others stayed. All over the valley there are villages, which are also called Kashgar.

Talking about identity was, contrary to what I expected, not more complicated or inflexible in the valley than in Bukhara. In Uzbekistan, one can say that many identities and ethnicities co-exist at the same time; on one's passport, in a genealogical sense, and in one's own perception. There also is a difference between what Hirsch (2005) calls "written/documented ethnicity" and "real ethnicity" (cf. also Martin 2001). The ethnicity category on the identity cards is a Soviet legacy, which continues to exist. Some informants wanted to know if there is such a category in Turkish or German passports as they did not approve of it and thought it did not matter who belonged to which category.

> "There are other places where it makes a difference like in Bukhara city. My son, he was sick when he was in the army. I heard about it and immediately went there. His passport has "Uzbek" written in it, but we are Tajiks. The doctor was also a Tajik. After I told him that we were Tajiks, his attitude was different and he kept my son at the hospital instead of sending him immediately back to his troop." (Shukratbay)

The Soviet Union generation remembers and idealizes the past, not only in respect to economic aspects but also in relation to ethnicity. Although the villages were not really multicultural and the experiences were mostly limited to military service and vacations, it is remembered and believed in multiculturalism.

> "Guests, be that Russians, Tatars or Jews, were all treated very well here. This shows how civilized Uzbeks and Tajiks are. And so also we were invited to their weddings, worked together; even some Russians learned to bake bread in a *tandir*" (Aziz)

Since independence, ethnicity and ethnic differences have gained some momentum but have not gained a completely new dimension in Uzbekistan. Of

course there is a process of Uzbekisation but it occurred during the Soviet period as well, especially in rural areas. Some Tajiks see this process as normal and serene, since they have lived with Uzbeks for so long. Younger generations have much less experience with ethnic minorities as many of them left in the first years of independence or live in the city. As I mentioned before, contact to the *tuman* or to the city is quite limited and allows for little contact to other groups. Satipaldi was born in 1987 and has no idea, which ethnic groups lived in Marxamat before. What his parents are accustomed to is shocking to him: "What? Jewish people lived here?" Since independence, military service is done within Uzbek territory, so there is no chance to see other places and ethnic groups as their fathers had done. This military experience was perceived as "seeing the world" and being cosmopolitan even though freedom of travel was limited.

Adults were usually well informed about their peers in many respects, but of course also concerning their ethnic background. When I asked who was Uzbek and who was Tajik in the village, most found it easy to say, "He is Uzbek" or "She is Tajik", using the language predominantly used by that person as main criterion. There were of course disagreements in some cases. Rigid criteria or complete certainty of belonging was only to be found in the cases of non-Muslims or Turkic groups like Kazaks, Kyrgyz or Turkmens, that is to say everyone else but Uzbeks and Tajiks.

Denial of there being any difference between Tajiks and Uzbeks was quite strong at both field sites but especially in Bukhara. This is usually attributed to an almost universal bilingualism and frequent inter-marriages (cf. Finke 2006). In conversations I asked my informants to think a little bit about it, as to if there is really "no difference" between Uzbeks and Tajiks. After a while of thinking about it, the answer was always: "No, there is no difference". When I asked that question, people seriously thought about it, as if in a quiz show. In the end, the answers ranged from "small differences" to "almost no difference", or "there is no difference anymore". Naming the small differences proved not to be possible either. These undefined, unexplained, yet existing small differences were, according to many informants, unimportant but still existing in an undefined or indescribable way. Perception of one's own language as being different was not so important as I would have expected. Both languages were in some degree intermingled, had been coexisting for a long time and were not seen as an obstacle for inter-ethnic contact. As Uzbeks or Tajiks of Uzbekistan, they

were very proud of themselves and of how hospitable they are. I was often asked as to if I had ever experienced this kind of hospitality anywhere before, which is seen as a criteria of civilization that are features of Uzbeks and Tajiks in contrast to former nomads.

> "Our ceremonies have the same form with Uzbeks, there are small, tiny differences but they don't matter, they are not significant differences. I have no idea to which Tajik dialect ours is close. Since we live with Uzbeks and mingle with them especially concerning language, there is a lot of mixing. Our grandchildren neither understand Tajik nor Russian properly. They grow up with Uzbeks and communicate in Uzbek. But that's a good thing, whoever wants to get promoted anywhere has to have "Uzbek" in his passport (Raxmon).

In the valley, Tajiks say that since they are living alongside Uzbeks, they speak a Tajik, which is strongly influenced by Uzbek. It is interesting that there are no critical voices in the village against this influence. Here, Tajik identity cannot be compared to the situation in Bukhara where Tajik schools still exist in rural areas. Of course, the size of the Tajik population is one very significant factor. In Bukhara, the Tajik language and the consciousness concerning this subject is unquestionably strong and obviously local Tajik elites also play a significant role. Different than in the valley, there is no doubt that good command of the Tajik language is very helpful in Bukhara city, which is not the case in Andijon at all. "It helps make things go faster". In the valley, Tajiks swim with the current, which is seen the future and accepted in a natural way. "We will all be Uzbek one day, living with Uzbeks; especially as we do not have Tajik schools either." In the valley, Uzbek is accepted as the usual language. Rather, the Russian language was seen as the "enemy" that should be resisted and not be assimilated to. This may be due to historical events that occurred in the region such as the Dukchi Ishan uprising in 1898.

Both Uzbeks and Tajiks would tell me that children of mixed marriages are healthier and particularly girls are more beautiful than others. They were giving examples like showing the daughters of the families, where couples belong to different ethnic groups. "Children of mestis (mixed) are beautiful." Tajiks are, in both settings, the ones that have the most intensive marriage relations with Uzbeks. In contrast, those groups with nomadic backgrounds are not seen as possible marriage partners, especially for Tajiks. In Bukhara, any difference between Tajiks and Uzbeks is denied and intermarriage is common. In the valley it is not quite as common. Still, Uzbek-Tajik marriages have been

going on for so long that they are not seen as inter-ethnic or mixed marriages in the strict sense. There is nothing exceptional to them and, in fact, to call these marriages inter-ethnic would not make very much sense for most people. If kinship marriages are the preferred type of marriage, again it overlaps with ethnic and it intensifies the relationships among people. Of course, there are brides who came from other villages but they are also related in some way or "co-ethnic". This makes things easier. Knowing Uzbek but not Tajik or vice versa – after all rather the exception – is not seen as a problem and it can be solved within time. People do not perceive it as a problem: "*ugrenip ketedi*" (she will learn it within time), or "I also couldn't speak the language in the beginning".

Raxmon, a Tajik informant in the valley, thinks that "Uzbeks and Tajiks are almost the same today", and the reason for that is, according to him, the dominant number of Uzbeks in the region. He also strongly prefers kin marriage. He has ten children; five girls and five boys. His two sons married two sisters. "If you know the one *kelin* is good, it makes sense to get the other one from the same family. All my *kelin* are Tajik. One of my daughters is married to an Uzbek family, one daughter is married to a Tashkent one, but the son-in-law is the son of my sister. It is good to keep a certain closeness." Another Tajik family with nine sons and six daughters told me that they had 18 children and only 15 of them survived. They have more than fifty grandchildren and five great-grand children. They have one Uzbek daughter-in-law from the neighbouring *viloyat* of Ferghana and all others are from neighbouring kolkhozes. They are all Tajik. Two of their son-in-laws are Tajiks and four are Uzbeks. At home Tajik is spoken but since there are lots of Uzbeks in the neighbourhood, their grandchildren understand Tajik but cannot speak it properly, especially since their school is also in Uzbek. According to them, Tajiks are proficient in both languages but Uzbeks are not.

Malika is originally from another *tuman* that is Uzbek dominated and she married to a Tajik whom she met at university. Her parents did not want her to marry a Tajik because in their view Tajiks are "Lulu".[7] However, she insisted and her parents then came to the *tuman* and gathered information about him and his family. Later they allowed the marriage to go forward. She had proved to her parents that her husband is not a Lulu only because he speaks

[7] This term is used for gypsies in Uzbekistan who are Tajik speaking (see also Finke 2006).

Tajik. In her home *tuman* Tajiks are put in the same category as Lulu and "Nobody marries a Lulu except a Lulu." One Uzbek informant from the valley also had serious reservations about the Lulu. Allegedly, this word stems from the marriage of two siblings, which is inacceptable for Uzbeks. Furthermore, according to Lulu tradition women work and take care of the family rather than men who stay at home, which is not consistent with Uzbeks' tradition.[8]

Within the same family preferences concerning the proper daughters- and sons-in-laws may differ in regard to ethnic background. For daughters it is important that the potential son-in-laws have good jobs and are financially secure with good families, yet for the sons emotional reasons and genealogical faithfulness were also important. This was the case in a Tajik-Uzbek family:

> "My two daughters are married to Uzbeks, actually Uzbek-Turks. But for my sons I want Tajiks. When they were small my husband asked them who they were going to marry, when they answered "a Tajik" he would give them money. I did not want my daughters to marry Uzbek-Turks, either a Tajik or an Uzbek would be better, but they did not give up. They went to my father-in-law and convinced him and he gave them his permission. Hence, there was nothing we could do. On the other hand, we should be glad, some people can't find anybody who wants to marry their daughter". (Malika)

Actually both sons, although their father is Tajik, cannot speak Tajik but this is not seen as a major problem either concerning their Tajik ethnicity or for their future marriage to Tajiks. "Tajik *kelin* will teach" is the general solution since the Tajik *kelin* brings the language and the identity back home again. "My husband is Tajik, but his passport says he is Uzbek. The same counts for my sons." Although herself an Uzbek, she wants her sons to marry Tajiks as this is the only way for them to get their Tajikness back due to their passports and to herself having no command of the Tajik language.

On the other hand, the distance to Turkmens and Kazaks is seen as a nomadic- sedentary dilemma, while the language is also mentioned as a problem. Hence, Uzbeks on the one hand and Kazaks or Turkmens on the other hand are not classified in the same category. "We are all Muslims." But being a Muslim, even one from the same school (Sunnites of the Hanafi branch), is not enough to be a part of the imagined circle that is narrowing and widening.

[8] In town, Lulu women walk around accompanied by their children and give people their blessings, for which they request money. They are found especially in front of market places or in parking lots and spread stinging nettle incense (producing smoke in a burner) against the evil eye and bad luck.

And religion is not the only criteria; locality and a sedentary or nomadic way of life also matter. "Kazak, Kyrgyz and Turkmens are different, their Muslimness is different." Although in some villages in Bukhara there was in fact a shared territoriality with Turkmen (but not with Kazaks) that alone does not help to establish and reinforce the relationships. As mentioned above, besides their lack of hospitality Kazaks and Turkmens are also blamed for their food. As a nomadic diet, this was not appreciated and perceived as simple and with little variety. Nomads are "meat consumers" and "they can simply cook one dish."

> "They just know to slaughter a sheep and eat it. They cannot cook properly, they just know *besh parmak*[9] and their *plov* is not eatable. Also, they do not keep their houses as clean as we Uzbeks do. During work trips of my husband to them, in the desert, he always came back with lice." (Nigora)

Both groups are also perceived as "rude" and "dirty" (*taza emes*), because they worked with livestock. A perceived discrepancy of the nomad-sedentary way of life is the reason given for avoiding such marriages. When Uzbeks or Tajiks marry a Kazak, especially in Bukhara, life can be made very hard for brides; "*kiyin aladi*". This is seen as a permanent problem, which is perceived as being different than the language problem, which disappears within time. The bride is seen as being alone amongst "nomads" with nobody around to support or understand her.

> "She has to get used to their *urf odat* (customs) and their *madaniyat* (civilization), which is quite different than ours. It is very difficult and she is all alone." (Nigora)

Thus, besides ethnicity the overlapping nomad-sedentary dichotomy is another marriage criteria. A physical feature of Kazaks, namely their shape of eyes, was seen as highly unattractive. For Bukharians, not only Kazakstan was far away, geographically and culturally, this distance begins already in Tashkent and with the Uzbeks of Tashkent.

> "Look, in Tashkent, which is not far away from Kazakstan; even the Uzbeks there have slanting eyes like the Kazaks." (Qaydar)

[9] Traditional Kazak food with boiled meat and home made noodles. It literally means „five fingers" as it is eaten by hand.

The biases against nomadic groups like Turkmens and Kazaks in Bukhara are stronger than against the Kyrgyz in the valley, where cohabitation and even limited marriage alliances exist. In Bukhara, sedentary and nomadic groups live in geographically separated areas (oasis and desert), hence their daily interaction is limited. The attitude of valley inhabitants towards (former) nomads, in this case especially Kyrgyz of Kyrgyzstan, is similar to that in Bukhara but not as severe. Some Kyrgyz talked about their Uzbek kin and mentioned that they had lived here for a long time and mixed marriages had occurred. Nevertheless, their nomadic background and their traditions are seen as an obstacle, even though they have been living in the Uzbek part of the valley for many generations. In the valley, even though people see Kyrgyz and Uzbeks as two different ethnic groups, they are perceived as being close to each other in some way. On both sides of the border Uzbeks and Kyrgyz live together and the assimilation of the Kyrgyz to the Uzbek population, make them similar to Uzbeks, so "they are uzbekisized". This happens through locality, otherwise the Kyrgyz from other regions are not seen as being close to Uzbeks.[10]

A Tajik informant expressed the same opinion and also categorized "Uzbekistan's Kyrgyz" as being different from "Kyrgyzstan's Kyrgyz". When the same person talked about other ethnic groups such as Meskhetian Turks and their conflict with Uzbeks in 1989, he would talk about what "the Uzbeks" did, but when talking about a different "conflict-free" subject he used the phrase "we Uzbeks". In the valley Uzbeks consider Tajiks and Kyrgyz as being close to them; even though informants tended to see language as a primary form of ethnic difference. Tajik, however, is not seen as being far, even though it is from a different language family. At the same time, Kyrgyz from Kyrgyzstan are far because of the language and customs while "our Kyrgyz", the ones living in Uzbekistan, are perceived as being close, since they speak Uzbek and are uzbekisized in other spheres of life. Another informant, a Kyrgyz *mahalla aqsaqal* from the valley, told me that his father had married twice and the children from the second marriage were registered as Uzbek since the second wife was an Uzbek[11]. He said that these children also married Uzbeks.

In everyday life, although they are uzbekisized, interaction with Kyrgyz

[10] Also within Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz from the south are perceived as „uzbekisized" in contrast to those in the north.

[11] Usually, the father's ethnicity is the determining one and his ethnicity is written in the passport.

people is limited to the neighbourhood. Some Kyrgyz also speak Tajik as they live in the same areas; especially children who play with other children. Otherwise, knowledge of the Tajik language is usually limited to a few words.

> "We do not give a girl to Kyrgyz. Their *toi* are like in Kyrgyzstan. They ask for *kalin*[12] and they slaughter their sheep in front of her when she comes to her new home (ayagina qoy soyadi). Of course, they also do not care for their houses as Uzbeks do." (Faruza)

At the same time, the Kyrgyz of the *vodi* are the only group, which is prepared to take *kelin* from other ethnic groups. And there are families with brides from different ethnic groups, such as a Kyrgyz *rais*, who has three daughter-in-laws; only one is Kyrgyz, one is Uzbek, and one is Uyghur. One daughter of him married a Kyrgyz from Aravan, a *tuman* directly on the other side of the border in Kyrgyzstan with a strong Uzbek population. If we think that they are a small minority and the only group where kin marriage is not allowed, this flexibility is unavoidable. For Kyrgyz, avoiding kin marriage is necessary to have healthy next generations. Furthermore, if they want to marry within Uzbekistan, they do not have any other alternatives besides the small Kyrgyz minority. I would also argue that since Uzbeks and Tajiks prefer to marry each other or within their own ethnic group, Kyrgyz do not have many alternatives and are forced to be open. Kyrgyz argue against Tajiks that they exclude them as potential marriage partners, with a kind of critic like in following citation.

> "My Kyrgyz daughter-in-law is from another kolkhoz. When she goes home, she speaks Kyrgyz, with us she speaks Uzbek. When I talk to my neighbours, Tatars and Uyghurs, we have a common language, namely Uzbek. Tajiks only give *kiz* (a girl) to Tajiks, and rarely to Uzbeks. We (Kyrgyz) do not take (spouses) from close relatives (*karindosh*). During Soviet times as well as today, it was often said that one should not marry your kin, but Tajiks did not care, they continue to do so, look at their families, look at their children, they are retarded." (Otabek).

Tribal Uzbeks are a category somehow in-between. One family's daughter-in-laws are all tribal Uzbeks. According to them, between Tajiks and tribal Uzbeks marriages are very few and have not been the case before at all. They said they still would not mix with Tajiks but that the differences are disappearing also because Tajik neighbourhoods are not separated anymore. The

[12] Bride wealth.

amount of bride wealth, which Uzbeks and Tajiks do not have but Kyrgyz and tribal Uzbeks have, is given as one reason. Although Uzbek-Turks and Kyrgyz both practice the tradition, it does not necessarily lead to marriage alliances between Kyrgyz and tribal Uzbeks.

> "We have *kalin*, but the Kyrgyz ask for too much, we give one sheep and some clothes; that is all." (Farshod)

Russians are regarded as harmless, simple and naïve but also gracious people as the following quote shows: "If a Russian eats a piece of your bread he respects you, he appreciates it. Tatars eat your bread and spit on it, while Kazaks are only good to their own people". It is interesting that Tatars were often regarded as, "... close to Russian even though they are Muslims". One of the reasons was their good command of the Russian language. However, they are less appreciated as Russians are. Tatars are usually also fluent in Uzbek and the jobs they occupy, translation and prestigious bureaucratic occupations, are like the ones the Russians have.

> "Russians do not have food like Uzbek food; they do not take care of their houses as much as Uzbeks do with furniture and decoration." (Munisa)

On the other hand, Russian culture, Russian schools, Russian TV and news means to be connected to the rest of the world, and Russian goods are seen as having high quality. One critique of the Russians is their ignorance to learn the native language, but there is no acceptance or tolerance of anti-Russian propaganda. This is the only resentment towards Russians. In daily life in rural areas, nobody talks about or discusses Russians. They were not an important part of their life in the past that one can miss in the present. This is different for the urban population. Many people regret the emigration of a well-known Jewish physician from Bukhara city to Israel because he was a very good surgeon and the younger generation is not educated with the same standards. A "good Soviet education system" is missed and today's quality is seen as bad, as "you get a diploma by bribes". That is also one of the rare critiques about today's situation. One interesting point was that in the valley there was not a significant Jewish population and contact to them was quite limited compared to Bukhara.

During my stay, ethnic belonging was not the decisive point and the lines were not drawn along group membership when it came to access to or ex-

clusion from resources. Being a member of a certain ethnic group does not automatically bring disadvantages with it but not being a member of a certain circle does. This circle, depending on the region, can include or exclude one or the other ethnic group. I would argue that Uzbeks and Tajiks or Kazaks are equally excluded or included. The economic reality and the circumstances in the post-Soviet period are new for everybody, independent of their ethnic belonging. All members of society are confronted with this reality and they deal with this problem via networks, which are, however, not necessarily based along ethnic lines. They may overlap, but "power" is more important than ethnic loyalty and solidarity. People of a different ethnicity but of the same or similar hierarchical positions cooperate with each other. Pressure along power lines does not allow favours along ethnic lines.

I would thus argue that power and status is more decisive for solidarity than ethnicity. In Marxamat certain positions are occupied by different ethnic groups. The *xokim* is a Turk (tribal Uzbek), most of the vice *xokim* are Uzbek and the chief of the medical station is a Tajik but registered as an Uzbek. This is similar in Bukhara. These individuals look after their relatives and friends as much as they can. Friends with certain power positions have priority over others and also sometimes over relatives since "power friends" provide support when needed. In certain situations powerful friends are more helpful than relatives. Status and power related problems can be solved and the benefits also shared within the group. The situation can be seen as passing the ball to each other; the main thing is to keep the ball within the group of players. Of course, in the case of Bukhara a Kazak or in the case of Andijon a Kyrgyz has almost no chance to reach certain positions such as *tuman xokim*, but this was the case also in the past. A Kyrgyz informant described their status with these words, "... a Kyrgyz can never become a *xokim*, not even his deputy, he can at the most be a bookkeeper or an *aqsaqal* in a Kyrgyz *mahalla*."

5.5 Social Networks and Solidarity Groups

I did not conduct specific network analysis in which the actors and their mutual manifold relations are comprehended. The existing interwoven relations among the actors were not asked systematically in order to establish a pattern. The data in this part of the dissertation is based upon observations and conversations with people who provided me with information about themselves and

others. I did not feel comfortable asking people directly about their relations and networks, especially if they held certain positions and their economic and political power was directly related to those relations. The ethnographer is curious but I only collected information that came to me.

The importance of social networks during socialist times has been described by a number of authors (Kandiyoti 1998; Kuehnast 2004; Ledeneva 1998, 2000; Humphrey 2002). According to Sneath, in Mongolia and other parts of post-socialist inner Asia collective and state farms shaped "the social relations of obligation" in the past and even after partial dissolution of those farms the networks survived along "the lines of power of the old organization" (1993:205). Relations generated through economic institutions continued to shape not only Uzbekistan's post independence economic and political developments but furthermore existing structures and networks remained basically untouched. It can also be argued that the power holders of the old organizations determined and shaped the restructuring after independence. These existing networks of the past also nourished themselves and maintained their links by obliging favours to one another. These were made up partly of kin relations but also included other categories such as party membership or common school time spent together as classmates.

A large, flexible and well-extended kinship network of mutual social obligations plays a significant role in present Uzbekistan. Any kind of help and assistance, material and non-material, is provided and circulated in this network. One reason for the importance of these relationships is embedded within the economic system. Everyone was guaranteed a reasonable living standard by the state but had little opportunity to go further. It was very difficult to come across luxury goods outside of the usual scope of state provision and sometimes it was even difficult to get those legally. Relatives or friends in key positions were often the only source for getting better quality or modern looking clothing. These goods often changed hands without direct payment. In fact, they were usually part of mutual exchange relations and thus helped to strengthen a nascent class structure within the socialist system. People with access to scarce goods could engage in informal trading networks that would provide each of them with what the others had (or could lay hands on). In other cases, these relations could develop into quasi-clientele ones. Individuals in key positions – redistributors within the economic state sector – could provide their relatives and friends with needed or wanted goods. They would then

expect loyalty and support in other spheres (e.g. helping out when building a house) from their clients.

Social networks did not lose their meaning or significance after independence. They are again used for allocating scarce resources, problem solving and for support in general. Through and within these networks help is asked for, reciprocated and trust relations are tested and reviewed. The social and economic changes of the post independence period redefined and rearranged the purposes of these networks, what and when they were called upon. Trust and reciprocity are the yardsticks of these relationships and the maintenance of these relationships, even in the case of the smallest daily interactions like borrowing a machine or instrument, is reconsidered according to these criterions. While in the past these networks were to acquire extras and did not serve as survival mechanisms, under the present conditions of Uzbekistan they provide the necessary means for poor people to survive and provide remarkable advantages for certain other people. Since in agriculture privatization did not occur, the valuable resource of arable land is still under the control of the state. It was handed over to certain people who are either power holders of the past or are somehow related to them, and to some new elites who emerged as businessman and were able to get access to valuable resources as *fermer* (see also Trevisani 2008:180).

On the other hand, the village or the *mahalla* is a solidarity unit where social relations are intensively lived and where kinship and neighbourhoods overlap. It is also the place where any type of secret is difficult to hide from others. Social relations are not static and they are negotiated and renegotiated among actors as kin, as neighbours and as friends, and strategies are adjusted according to the circumstances. Talking about one's own or about others marriages, relations with in-laws or about any other new development in the village or *tuman* are topics discussed among women, which are discussed when meeting up together or in organized *gap*.[13] In *gap*, relations are maintained, news is exchanged and also help may be requested. *Toi*, like other life cycle ceremonies, are also the places where social networks are shown, established and intensified. In these, one gain value through one's guests; the more the better. Hence the host shows off his network and the guests consequently

[13] *Gap* means 'word' and also 'to talk' (the infinitive being gaplashmak). This is not only a social gathering but also a rotating savings association. The usual form is only for men, and women then have separate gaps, but there are also mixed *gap* (see also Kandiyoti 2004:345).

remember and talk about it for years to come. *Hashar* is another way of mutual help that is not only limited to kin but also involves neighbours and friends helping with a contribution of labour. It can come in the form of a community project or be a private occasion, for example the construction of a house (see also Rasanayagam 2002b:95). People are mobilized to contribute their labour and the house owner covers the daily expenses such as meals. In the future one of the helpers has his turn.

Close kin have intensive daily interactions as brothers, sisters and parents, and simultaneously as neighbours. The term "xabar sorayim" is used for these short visits, which literally means "asking news". Of course, each visit is a kind of information exchange and in the case of elderly people who rarely go outside, every visitor brings news. A job at the school, *ambulatorya* or at the kolkhoz administration is a valuable source of information and keeps people with updated information. This information usually has an economic value and is often related to the organisation of cultivation. It may include finding a tractor driver or knowing who lost one's land as a *fermer* and the like. Women or young girls, who do not work or go to school, are excluded from information gathering processes. Young boys are better information sources because they spend more time outside and are often used as postmen. Oydinoy describes the changes in personal relations in the post-Soviet period with the following words.

> "Neighbourhood relations have changed a little. Before, whoever cooked something would bring a plate to his neighbour. Whoever needed money, would come and ask and nobody would hesitate to lend them money. You knew you would get your money back; you knew you would be able to pay it back. It was not necessary to chase after it. Today, everybody hides what they do or do not have. If you lend somebody some money, you do not get it back. It is not easy. Let's say you get on the bus and see two people you know. In the past, whoever got off first, would pay for the others before he got off. Now, either he only pays for himself or pretends not to see the others. The driver also wouldn't demand to know who already paid and who didn't, as he does today."

One reason the bus driver now wants to know who paid is because the firms are private enterprises and the drivers' incomes depend on it. During Soviet times, he had a fixed monthly salary and the number of passengers was not directly relevant to his salary. Furthermore, people were able to pay their bus ticket and it was not necessary to travel without a ticket.

Some informants said that money lending today only happens amongst close relatives. I did notice, however, some people in the neighbourhood ask each other for money. If there is an amount of trust based on past experiences – "you know it will be paid back" – and the borrowed amount of money is not large (if it can't be paid back there isn't much of a loss), then there is usually no reason not to help others. In fact, asking relatives for money is not always as easy as one may think. If a son-in-law is not hard working or is a drinker, financial support is not a matter of course. In that case discussions and arguments take the place of helping out. Exceptions are made in situations of bad health or if there is not enough labour power or the children are too young to help out. Some informants believe it possible to ask their relatives for money while others believe it may harm their relationship.

Shop owners have a list of people unable to pay their shopping on a certain day and promising to make their payments monthly. This type of credit-shopping (*yazdirip almak*) is not a simple act for either side. Some informants claim that they would never do it because it harms one's reputation. Some people say it is normal because there is no other way, "what should people do, go and steal things?" For the shop owner the important thing is to get his money and so it matters to him if the person is trustworthy or not, which automatically excludes certain people.

Whether a *sunnet toi* or a wedding feast, these are occasions where relatives, friends and neighbours come together and help each other. Preparations start many days before and there is an organized division of labour among relatives and friends. Most of the time this is an occasion for expected reciprocity to be enacted. These feasts are the place where networks and wealth are represented, evaluated and even documented. These networks, of course, always include Uzbeks and Tajiks, which is one reason why differences, if they ever existed, are becoming negligible. According to Kadirjan, there is one more reason why existing small cultural differences between ethnic groups – so small that he was not able to name them –are disappearing. They are disappearing due to "economic reasons", so he said. Traditions are lost because of money, there is no money left for living out traditions. The celebration of life cycle rituals, the prepared amount of food, the number of dresses the bride gets etc. are all placed in this disappearing traditions category.

Usually, the whole village or *mahalla* is invited to a *toi*. People are invited and informed of the time and location, although many know and talk about

it beforehand. If all these people are invited to the *toi*, one thinks of a huge event with many guests. The *toi* are crowded but not as much as I imagined. Usually, if the guests are not relatives or close friends, only one person per family participates. There have to be good reasons for many members of a household participating at the same time; being relatives, good friends or reciprocity. There is also a group of people that does not come to the *toi* but stops only by and show their congratulations by giving 100-200 sums. These people avoid coming in and eating with the other guests. The reason behind that is if they come in, sit and eat with the other guests, then they need to bring a real present, more than just a symbolic contribution. And, based on the reciprocity principle, they should also invite these people for their *toi*, which increases the costs. People going to every *toi*, yet not giving real gifts are not welcomed and are talked about. "They come and eat *plov*, fill their stomach there, because they can't afford to cook it at home anymore".

Organisation and control of *toi* are partly the duty of the *mahalla rais* and his committee, especially if it is the wedding of a poor family. Besides supporting the needy families, keeping and preserving order during feasts is one of the major roles of the *mahalla rais* and co. Weddings and other feasts are cost intensive in Uzbekistan, and in the case of a family that does not possess enough financial resources, the *mahalla* helps to organize the event under the leadership of the *mahalla aqsaqal* who makes the necessary arrangements and assigns jobs to the *mahalla* residents. For example, a new regulation was made by the *tuman* administration in Marxamat regarding the ending time of feasts, the implementation thereof was the duty of the *mahalla* committee. The *toi* are supposed to be finished, depending on how far they are from the *tuman* centre, between 4 and 7 o'clock pm. The main reasons for this regulation are that people wouldn't drink as much and hence fight less, and that visitors from farther away can leave before nightfall thus making it easier to find transport and return home safely.

> "All these rules exist so we don't get into trouble and order is retained. We do not spend as much money for *toi* as we used to. It is still expensive but we economize; less *plov* is served and there is less meat than there used to be. In the past, we would cook large amounts of meat for *toi*, something we can't do anymore. We had the *sunnet toi* for my son for three days, yet in the case of my grandchildren we just went to the hospital and they were circumcised there, afterwards we had the Koran citing at home and that was it." (Yusuf)

In contrast to the valley, there is no regulation like this in Romitan, actually quite the opposite. A *toi* usually starts only after sunset, because, so the argument, all people have something to do during the day and can not come earlier.

In spite of these regulations and in spite of the economic difficulties, life cycle ceremonies remain rather costly celebrations. During such occasions a notebook is kept and the gifts are written down. Everything is registered. According to Bahodir, poor people are the ones that usually keep a notebook and write everything down. Why? "They try to give a gift of the same value back. The rich can afford to buy something of the same value anyway and do not need to calculate or push their limits. In the end, whoever is rich actually makes a profit through their feasts. The higher your level in society is, the larger the number of rich guests bringing valuable presents is.[14] I remember the wedding *toi* of the *xokim's* son and about how many people attended; all *tuman xokim* of Andijon *viloyat*, the *rais* of other organisations, all bringing valuable presents. If your guests are almost all of the same rank, you do not need a notebook. In the beginning we also had one, but have since done away with it". (Bahodir)

Close relatives are an important means of support for expensive events, especially for *toi*. Not only do they support the events through their labour, but also by bringing expensive presents. It is not unusual to tell your brothers, "you buy the sheep for the *toi*, you buy vodka". It is actually not so much a gift but rather a debt, and when the time comes, you pay it back". Again, the goods are very often not returned in the form of money, but in goods of equal value. Wedding presents are often returned in an almost predetermined way.

> "We return the value of the gift we get at *toi* plus a little extra. For instance, if I get one crate of vodka (twenty bottles), I return the crate and give also a bottle of soft drink like cola." (Xalil)

Since *toi* of rich and higher-ranking people have more socially homogenous guests with little status diversification, their gifts are also of approximately the same value. Even though Bahodir told me that wealthier people don't keep notebooks, my observations have concluded that people keep notebooks, independent of the economic status of the host. The value of gifts is measured according to the price of one-kilo meat. If somebody brings a *chapan*[15] or

[14] TVs, music centres, video players, carpets and sheep are considered as valuable gifts.

[15] A kind of traditional coat worn over clothes (usually by men). It is stuffed with cotton

contributes rice and drinks, it is calculated according to the price of meat and an equivalent value is returned back to the same person. Everybody calculates with that yardstick and there is nothing to feel bad about. One informant told me that they still keep a notebook, mentioning that women are good to keep in mind. They wrote down who brought a sheep, vodka or a carpet[16] so they can bring equally valuable things back to the giver.

I wondered how, with all the people present, one could actually keep track of the gifts given. This seems to be under the control of the women. "They remember who brings what and always have one eye watching." New technology does, however, aid the women in their task. During the ceremony a video camera films everything and has a special focus on the gift-giving part of the ceremony. "We document it, we document it by video camera and can fast-forward and rewind to see who gave what. Furthermore, there is always a family member who sees it." This is used as an additional measure to bookkeeping and reduces the risk of something being overlooked.

> "People are remembered according to their gifts. It does not matter if you have enough money to buy a present or not. Especially people who are not well off try to give presents that are at least as good as the ones given by wealthier people. It is a long-term way of thinking; it is a long-term investment, an acknowledgement. That's the reason I say that people are remembered by their gifts." (Bahodir)

Gifts are debts, someday they have to be paid back, but the exact time of repayment is determined by certain occasions, usually happy ones. Once, an event in Bukhara led to trouble for both sides. A gift, which was given by the uncle of the host family, was the reason of the dispute. The uncle wanted to have his presents reciprocated without having to wait until the correct opportunity. He gave a case of vodka and a sheep for the wedding, yet he wanted something in return. A part had already been paid back and a time limit for the rest to be reciprocated was basically set, namely the next *toi* of the other family. But the uncle insisted on an immediate and complete reciprocation and then threatened the family, which asked the militsiya for help. The actual reason for the dispute was unknown, but demanding immediate reciprocation

and, depending on the material used, there is a huge price span. It is also an appreciated and common gift, since it can be given for any occasion; see also Werner (1997) for Kazakstan.

[16] Fabric carpets usually serve aesthetic purposes and are used both for decoration of a wall and on the floor. Hand made carpets (*kilim*) are either expensive or do not fit the taste for home decoration.

is frowned upon and it is therefore assumed that the reason for the dispute was most probably something quite serious.

The money for the celebration expenditures comes from different sources, from resource pools among kin to one's own saved money such as rearing cattle, from petty trade (clothing or other goods) or, depending on the region, from smuggling cotton to Kyrgyzstan. It is astonishing how people are able to save money, but at the same time spend so much – something I like to call the real "Uzbek puzzle". The answer I get to this puzzle is always the same: "we make *toi*", "we save money for that", "we make debts which we pay back throughout many, many years", "the costs are simply beyond one's own means, and relatives help". *Toi* are debt cycles and the debts that are made and repaid are remembered very well. Since gifts are not given in a discrete form, the pressure on the giver's side is stronger. Not only the host but also the others from the village know who presents what. This determines one's freedom of giving in a significant way as well as the affordability of the giver.

Gifts and the obligation to return them make up a „total social fact" (Mauss 2000 [1923]) in which the many aspects of society such as morality and economy are expressed. Also, as Mauss pointed out, gift giving is a fine and carefully staged and calculated act. In the Uzbek case gift giving at first glance was pictured and told to me as „we present what we can afford and what comes from heart", is more than that in practise. It is an obligation which is observed and evaluated by others, and is far from situational generosity. It covers economic self-interest, social pressure, obligations, duties and for affiliation, confirmation of affiliation as part of the community. The clear calculation behind gift giving is displayed very well when we look at how precise the documentation of it is. The gifts people get are what they „deserve" according to their records which are kept by others, namely, the receivers of past gifts. When we think about the narrow spectrum of potential gifts that are available, it is not rare that the same objects become gifts for many people. In the end, in most cases, it is the value that counts, and not its usefulness. The entry of gifts to households not only helps finance these rituals but also confirms and solidifies the relations and status of the individual.

I would argue that in the post-Soviet context, „generalised reciprocity" (Sahlins 1972) tends to be avoided and "balanced reciprocity" gets more and more attention and consideration. This is due to the fact that, as a binding means of social solidarity and networks, gift exchange became a more special

and survival relevant in Uzbekistan. Perhaps one form of „generalised reciprocity" is the attitude of the some well off people when they offer a sheep to the community during religious feasts or on other occasions, a symbol of giving which aims to create sympathy within the community. The annexation of „giving" during the performance of a religious ritual also has multiple facets. In the Uzbek context, one can interpret this as a kind of redistribution of the surplus that is actually taken away from people. Slaughtering a sheep during *qurban aid* and preparing a meal for the village also has an emotional and moral value and is very well suited to generalised reciprocity without repayment. But this also shows one's economic and political power combined with one's caring attitude. The involvement of kin and relatives in this gift exchange circle, which is an economic and social act and is embodied in the gift, carries the burden and the costs of post-Soviet economic and social developments. These exchanges, namely gifts as objects, not only keep the rituals alive by partially financing them, but they also help to maintain the relations among the receiver and giver of the object. The close relations can also be annihilated by asking for gifts back or by improper returns like an unpaid or partially paid back loan. Gift giving became a burden for the poor who are not able to afford proper gifts for certain occasions and networks. However, they are forced to do all they can in order to be part of the reciprocal relations.

Chapter 6

Political Strategies: Social Stratification and the Meaning of Borders

6.1 Introduction

No matter whether it is called reform, restructuring or simply renaming the remnants of the past, there have been massive intended and unintended changes in Uzbek socio-economic and political landscape since 1991. In rural Uzbekistan agriculture and related resources play a significant role in this respect, namely in relation to power relations and upward mobility. Any type of power is based on access to agricultural resources. One group keeps the control of them and decides who gets access; the other is the privileged and eligible one to have access to land. Being located within one or the other group may be the best thing to have in independent rural Uzbekistan. Often these two overlap considerably. Those allocating land are usually also among those to whom land is allocated. Since the Karimov regime does not give any free space for real political participation, economic power is not only the most valuable one but also is without any alternative. There is only one way of being a part of the system and that is economic participation, which also brings status and power.

This chapter is about the role of politics, local, regional as well as national ones, in the life of people. It starts with an examination of social stratification and elite building in the post-socialist era discussing the extent to which these

reflect a continuation of the Soviet period. This is followed by an analysis of local politics and bureaucracies that shape economic and social transactions before the issue of the shadow of the nation state is looked at in some more detail. The chapter ends with a lengthy discussion of the meaning of internal as well as international borders. As a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union these have changed the life of many in a fundamental way as large parts of people's networks remained on the other side of the border and are thus difficult to access today. On the other hand, the very existence of a border also creates multiple new ways of making money either by petty trade and smuggling or by day-to-day migration.

The new borders play a peculiar role in this. They are of particular importance for those with limited or no access to land and political power. Making use of borders by crossing them (more or less legally) includes people working in Kyrgyzstan on a daily basis to those smuggling goods back and forth, and those trying to make large business exploiting the differences between the two economic systems. The first group includes people who take goods from their work place and sell them abroad to make ends meet. Entering Kyrgyzstan, either for work or for smuggling, means to accept the conditions at the border and on the other side of it. However, the weak bargaining position of border crossers exposes them to any kind of exploitation. It is also obvious that there is not a real intention to stop people, besides a few exemplary cases, so that the power of the state is made to feel. Unexpected border closings for arbitrary reasons or control tightening even along internal *viloyat* borders creates a situation of uncertainty which reminds the people of the power of the state and its ability to exercise control over them. At the same time, however, uncertainty leads people to use the resources and take the chances of the day since for tomorrow nobody knows what will happen.

6.2 Social Stratification

Although, for example, the president of Uzbekistan was part of the Soviet elite and has held his current position since 1991, it is not exactly true to say that present elites are just a continuation of the past. It may be true for many of the cases, especially when we look at the high-level power holders, but at the local level things are more complicated.

It is not surprising that children of the old elite generation are equipped

with the most important resource, namely networks of their parents and relatives. A good educational background is not enough to open the doors for a career. Financial support of ones family and social networks can help you pass the exams and get your diploma easily in comparison to other students who do not have these resources. According to my informants, during the Soviet times things were not very different than today; it was always helpful to know people in certain positions and it was possible to get access to scarce resources.[1] But, so a common view, today the situation differs from the past in that elites control everything and there is no instance to go and ask for one's rights. These people determine upward mobility in every respect, be that economic or political. How elites support elites and produce elites can be seen in different life spheres and education is one of them.

People like Bahodir who have certain positions and benefit from them, work and get (private) things done under time pressure. Positions like he has, as a leader, a *rexber*, are acquired by appointment and are not permanent. It means that the person may be in the position for years and years but it may also be that it ends almost overnight if the balances between Tashkent and the *viloyat* or between the latter and the *tuman* changes and respective power holders do not correspond to each others expectations. Sometimes, the removal of the *xokim* leads to changes in the entire *xokimiyat*, which can lead to a wide circle of replacements. Although as far as I can see, there was no such direct threat to Bahodir, I seldom saw him relaxed. It was not unusual for him to come home in the evening, change his clothes and put his training pants on and then, after a telephone call, put his suits back on again and leave the house for many hours. In most cases the reason was "the *xokim* is calling". He was always busy with his own position's responsibilities but also accompanying the *xokim* or other administrative personal, often on occasions a health professional has nothing to contribute. He was always available for any kind of demands from the *xokimiyat*. He was taken to meetings in Andijon as a "support person" since he had worked in the city before and knows the people, which means he has the necessary and useful networks.

Bahodir was telling me how important it is to be a *rexber*. "If you are a *rexber*, everybody respects you, you get things done, otherwise you are nothing

[1] In Russian this is called *blat*, defined as „ . . . the use of personal networks and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in short supply and to find a way around formal procedures" (Ledeneva 1998:1).

and you don't get things done anywhere". According to him, if you are solely equipped with knowledge, education will not get you very far. Only because he is a *rexber* can he facilitate some additional income, resources and exchanges not only for his own family, but also for his parent's house and his brothers. Otherwise he would not be able to manage all these things. He and his wife often told me that their oldest son does not study well and they want him to finish his school as long as Bahodir has his *rexber* position. As aforementioned, contacts and networks are the one aspect of the benefits that one gets via his position and the other one, the financial aspect allows the family to make the necessary payments.

Having a higher education diploma in a *rexber's* family is a must. The quality of the education and the specific discipline have become less important since their children get jobs not because of their studied subjects but rather via the networks of their parents. The older generation still appreciates their "good" Soviet education. Bahodir describes his career as a product of that system. He is well aware that in present Uzbekistan he would not get the same chance as a child of a simple kolkhozcu. His children, especially his two unmarried sons, are to study and graduate while he is investing in all his networks and resources to allow them to finish university and get their degrees. For him and his wife as an "educated family" it is a must to have a university diploma, especially for the sons. Their oldest son, according to the mother, is lazy and has not studied enough for his classes while the youngest one, who is studying medicine, is ambitious and, as a successful student, has a tuition waiver. He passes his classes without any problem and his father knew all his professors since they either studied together or have intensive contact via his position in the *tuman*.

For others like the kolkhozcu of the present, they lack the means (economic and social) in order to realise an upward mobility, for instance through education. In Bukhara a young man who got his Master degree via a scholarship from a British university was sitting at home in the village after his return to Uzbekistan. He was not long back, but he was already disappointed that he could not get a job. His family did not have the necessary connections, which is in the end more valuable than his diploma. They were telling me that their son was a good student and was sent by the government to study abroad. They thought that when he came back the government would also take care of him since there are not many young well-educated men in Uzbekistan. But after he

came back he could not find a job and stayed in the village. According to his father, he was asked to pay if he wants to get a "good job". He was told that with the income his son would get (salary plus bribes) he would be able to pay it back in no time. This family possessed neither the necessary financial nor the social capital, which is essential in order to get things done. Independence and western education did not lead to the expected upwards mobility.

The existence of patron-client relationships in a place like Uzbekistan, where the access and distribution of resources and overall opportunities are unequal, is not an unexpected phenomenon (Zhang 2001:13). Things get done within a narrow circle of people and their networks. The relationship between the *viloyat xokim* and *tuman xokim*, as well as between the *tuman xokim* and "their *fermer*" are based on personal loyalty, obligations, exploitation and implicit coercion. Some elderly people and some of the present *fermer* blame the *xokim* and make them responsible for the unsuccessful cotton harvesting. Lack of knowhow and absence of new technology, depleted soil and lack of water are the main problems. The "upper people" do not know about these things, or they "know but act as if they do not know" in order to force people to work hard. There are also critical voices accusing not the "upper people" but the *fermer*. Some people work as *fermer* without having enough knowledge about agriculture and without knowing budget calculations, accounting without any kind of experience for this engagement. According to one informant, "nobody gets a job or earns money deservedly and rightfully". While this view is rarely voiced, it is one that is held by a lot of people. Critics aiming *fermer* like that „only certain people can get access to land as *fermer* and they do not know how to work" become a main reproach to post independence inequalities.

> "If you say, I am a *fermer* and sit at home and let others work, how can you be successful? You should work more. If you do not work, nobody works. You should go and check the kolkhozcu, check the fields, check if the water comes in time; otherwise there is no success." (Raxmon)

As became clear in the last chapter, the kolkhozcu represent the most disadvantaged group in post-Soviet rural Uzbekistan and have very limited access to any kind of resources while their labour is heavily exploited. As mentioned before, being a child of a kolkhozcu and making a career in the old system was possible. Bahodir's father was a simple man, a soldier during the war, who worked as a kolkhozcu for his entire life. His mother was not well educated either and just took care of the many children at home. After independence,

while kolkhozcu started to lose on their living standards and to survive with limited possibilities, some members of the old cadre (leading positions) became richer by monopolising power and resources. The weaknesses of kolkhozcu's networks make them more dependent on *fermer* or *shirkat* and they have no means to undermine the authority of others since they are easily replaceable. The kolkhozcu were mostly treated as ignorant, thus requiring stringent control when they are given responsibilities. They are seen as a homogeneous group with limited capabilities. Going to a *fermer* or to the *xokimiyat* in order to receive their delayed payments or demand their rights is usually pointless. Their problems are seen as unimportant and their lack of networks forces them to stay in their position.

There is also little solidarity amongst the kolkhozcu. Being related to one of the supervisors does also not protect them from irregular payments, exploitation and conflict. Under these circumstances, one must ask why the kolkhozcu do not act collectively and if they do how is it expressed in Uzbekistan? As Comaroff and Comaroff (1987:192) stated to "... look beyond formal institutions and statements, and into the texture of the everyday". This helps to find answers instead of looking for associations or organisations in Uzbekistan's political climate. Consciousness or protest of kolkhozcu in Uzbekistan is not unsimilar to other places in the world and is expressed in a form of work related everyday acts like foot-dragging and absenteeism (cf. van Onselin 1973). That is also why *fermer* and *shirkat* often have conflicts with the kolkhozcu and complained about their work discipline, absentees, and unreliability.

Housing became one of the wealth and status symbols, which was not the case in the past. The construction style and material of the houses all look the same in *tuman* centres in both field settings in Romitan and in Marxamat. But especially in urban areas like Andijon or Bukhara new houses are constructed in spectacular ways, which displays the prosperity of the owners at first glance.[2] It should also be considered that houses are private property and to invest in them is not only a symbol of wealth but also may be the most secure investment that one can have. The situation is slightly different in villages where the

[2] In Tashkent one can see even more luxurious houses. I had the chance to see many of them during their construction in certain neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, I was never invited into any of these houses and never had the chance to see them when they were finished and furnished. One can just imagine from the outside how it looks inside. A short view into the courtyard is possible, during the moments the courtyard door is opened and closed. Humphrey talks about these new houses, the villas "as a mark of cultural change" between the „New Russians" and „the old Soviet *nomenklatura*" (2002:180).

diversity of income sources is not as wide as in the cities and fewer people hold lucrative positions either in the bureaucratic apparatus or in business. The condition of a house in a rural setting, namely renovated or not, is a significant attribute that differentiates one from another. Doing necessary reparations and prohibiting decay necessitates a certain amount of money, which is difficult to come by, as one often needs money for other situations such as health care or education. In the village prosperity is shown and stressed especially on the inside in contrast to the exteriorly splendid urban houses. The number of rooms, having a kitchen and affording a bathroom, furniture and garments are some indicators of living in good standards. Usually, high-level cadre will tend to reconstruct their house instead of renovating it, especially if they live in the *tuman* centre. In the villages, people tend to be more modest as looks from outside the entrance gates, *eshik* or *darvoza*, cannot always be ignored. Since building land is a scarce resource, gradual reconstruction and renovations are the only possibilities anyway.

While presenting one's wealth in rural areas is rather well dosed, in urban settlements there is no reluctance to show and live one's wealth. In the valley, one day I was invited to the *shirkat* chief accountants house in the *tuman* centre. During the conversation everyone complained how people talked about them, about people in *rexber* positions. Malika nodded and confirmed by telling how hard her husband and she worked hard and that they could not save any money with all the costs they had, like taking care of in-laws, university dues of their children and other things. According to these two families, others do not have any right to talk about them since their husbands are hardworking men, and that is the reason why they are well off. Actually, both families know that their living standards could not be done with the salaries their husbands or the other family members get but would avoid mentioning this in front of others.

6.3 Local Elites

The strong control and surveillance policy of the Uzbek state has reached the rural areas under the policy of common peace and order. This policy necessitates an internal centre-periphery balance. Local appropriation of state symbols and the local representation of the state are not detached from the centre's directions and aims. On the other hand, an analysis of micro-political

processes shows the "real power" or the "relative autonomy" since in everyday life looking into how power is grounded shows the tolerance degree of deviation from the state. Everyday power relations on the local level cannot simply be seen as an extension of the centre. A centre-periphery balance must be guaranteed and the cooperation between the power holders must exist so the desired "peace and order" is guaranteed. Representation of the macro level at the local level through the appropriation of symbols and the execution of decisions shapes and influences the state's "vertical" domination (Gledhill, 2000:128).

The following examples show the ability and eligibility of state power holders, be those a *xokim* or a nurse from the village medical unit, and how they transgress space. Depending on the situation, whoever is placed in the vertical hierarchy holds the privilege "of spatial mobility". Some have more power and can transgress many spaces while some have a more limited sector for their own. In this space, the duty is order and control and to make the state felt. However, the needs and the happenings in the rural areas shape the relationship mostly according to the wishes of the periphery. For instance, in the valley the officials are able to stop or control smuggling; yet, it remains a measure that exists solely in presidential speeches in Tashkent. In reality nothing is done. In this centre-periphery relationship an occasional replacement of officials happens, yet after a while the problem that led to the replacement returns.

Not every state organ in the village does get the same appreciation from its citizens. The kolkhoz as an institution, even though there is officially no kolkhoz-system anymore, still enjoys an amount of prestige and power while the *selsoviet*, which deals with all issues except for economic ones, does not enjoy the same respect. The village administration is just perceived as a "document and registration office", even though these documents are highly relevant for any occasion from marriage to *hajj* visits. However, the kolkhoz or *shirkat rais* is still the one who maintains close contact with the *tuman xokimiyat* and enjoys a status inherited from the Soviet period. After independence, insecure economic conditions and the demand for land that was under state monopoly make this institution remain remarkably significant. In contrast, the *selsoviet's* surveillance and regulative role has not promoted it to a higher level. If there were not a picture of President Kariomov and the flag of Uzbekistan, the office of the *selsoviet rais* would not look like a government place. Heating

installations, telephones and other infrastructures are often out of order and the car is also broken. The *selsoviet* is just the place where one must go to obtain any kind of documents and to register things. It also collects paperwork on a variety of issues for offices higher up. Relations with the *selsoviet* are important but not decisive for the success or failure of any kind of venture.

The *aqsaqal* as quasi-traditional authorities are sometimes asked to help in dispute mediations, usually within families or in neighbourhoods. Dispute reasons can range from marital problems to water usage or educative advice. The *aqsaqal* do not, however, involve in issues, which can lead to conflict with authorities above them. As mentioned before, local officials like the *xokim* are designated to their positions and have to find the balance between peace and order in their districts and bureaucratic interest groups above. During their term, their own material interest must be fulfilled, but they also need to meet state demands like the fulfilment of the cotton plan. In the Chinese case under state socialism Zang describes a similar situation: "(A)lthough rural cadres were designated state agents, they often faced a dilemma how to meet state demands as well as the interests of their own communities" (2001:92). In the Uzbek case, serving the interest of the own community means a certain level of satisfaction with the economic situation within locally created and manageable possibilities. Concerning political or religious issues there is less moving space. People go, ask and complain to the *xokimiyat* about their economic situation but not for political and religious ones.

Competition between regions is not only expressed on a cultural level, but is also a topic of conversation between people. Replacements of local bureaucrats are either seen as a case in which economic goals were not reached or order was not kept. Unstable public order is tolerated even less than unfilled plans and result in personnel change for certain positions. Keeping tight pressure on people and not give any space to disorder in addition to economic success is the guarantee for the local elites. Changing or not paying attentions to plans is always possible – by bargaining, fulfilling it with other means or being excused because of uncontrolled reasons like weather. But there is no excuse for voices of protest arising. That is why local elites sometimes need to make certain compromises and the legal apparatus works beyond the wishes of local elites like in case of Gulnoza. Although these kinds of rules may seem to be against the local elites, they are actually in their favour, as they can rescue their positions by keeping public order and keeping divisive voices calm.

The *xokim* actually feel the breath of upper level bureaucrats on their neck more regularly than ordinary citizens since they have to report to them and provide explanations when things do not work out as those above wanted them to. Personnel changes do not happen due to the dissatisfaction of the people on the spot or of voices from below, rather it is the dissatisfaction of the other upper level that things may get out of control. Bureaucratic replacements, depending on the status of the dismissed person, are interpreted as "the decision of Tashkent" when the *viloyat xokim* is replaced and the "decision of the *viloyat*" when the *tuman xokim* is dismissed. Insecurity of achieved positions, of course, produces short-term oriented bureaucrats who try to reach their own personal targets during their term.

Another feature of a good governor or *xokim* is whether or not he divides and gives land to private *fermer*. At the end of the harvest season the regions are listed on TV according to their success, that is plan fulfilment. Usually, Andijon and the neighbouring provinces of Ferghana and Namangan are the first and often only ones in the country. People often gave their own explanations of the list and made comments such as "our soil is bad", "we had bad wetter" or "the *xokim* forced us to plant the seeds ahead of time". Reasons for the success of others were thus described as "their soil is better", "their *xokim* is a good one, he divided and gave the land to *fermer*", or "he is a good friend of the president, so he knows how things work". No matter if people like the *viloyat* or *tuman xokim*, loosing the "battle of cotton" to other provinces is not something they like to hear.

As aforementioned in chapter three, although only people with certain qualifications can be accepted as *fermer*, there were often complaints about *fermer* and unreached targets and their privileged status is scorned at *xokimiyat* gatherings. The number of meetings is also justified because of the alleged incompetence of *fermer* who need to have supervision. Tight control during all procedures is seen as a must for economic success. At these meetings *fermer* were also accounting for and explaining their performance and work schedule. The attitude and the motto of the *xokimiyat* is that without surveillance nothing will work. Surprise or regular inspections and endless meetings that take place in different spaces, according to Ferguson and Gupta (2002), are the devices by which *verticality* is practiced. These inspections and meetings are usually conducted in an atmosphere of tension and are not particularly friendly. Furthermore, they are often accompanied by threatening words and

punishments as I mentioned before in chapter three and four. Each level of state authority legitimizes its procedure as well as failure by just carrying out the instructions of their higher officials. The unsuitable decisions and orders from above are seen as "giving these orders without knowing the local facts." Their main interest is merely the cotton plan. One example would be the unsuccessful seed planting using *pilyonka*, which is, according to many not suitable for Uzbekistan.

Being a *fermer* means being part of a circle in which state regulations are present and the economic activities are "controlled, planned and regulated" by the state. I witnessed several surprise or regular visits from the *viloyat* governor who inspected the fields. This event turned cotton fields into a different place and gave it a different meaning and significance. It is a kind of ritual in which the state presents itself along the cotton fields where it still keeps a tight control on it. This type of visit, which does not belong to everyday life, brings the state back to life, at least on a provincial level, and rattles the local rhythm of people by representing and embodying "state hierarchy and encompassment". It broke the locality and displayed the existence of Tashkent. This kind of practices shows "state spatialization" by encompassment (cf. Ferguson and Gupta, 2002). It is also a show of control when "orders from above" reach the bottom and are followed.

Days before people started to talk about the *viloyat xokim* being on tour and inspecting the fields. For his visit female and male kolkhozcu started to whip away the dust and clean the main road. Up until the time he showed up, the days were completely hectic, nobody had time to talk, *fermer* and kolkhozcu were not available to meet. Preparations were limited, however. Since the *xokim* is a busy man and not interested in other things it was enough to limit the preparations to the main street and prepare the fields which are located close to it. During the visit, the *tuman xokim*, kolkhoz *rais*, *fermer* and kolkhozcu as well as village elders gathered around. But he did not come on the day he was expected. Finally, the following day he arrived in a convoy that let everybody know someone important was coming, being accompanied by officials of different hierarchical ranks and positions, and of course a police escort. He got out of his Volga[3] with tinted windows and started to inspect

[3] Volga cars were produced in the Soviet Union and seen as a symbol of higher status. It is highly appreciated and seen as particularly comfortable and solid. They would often be called "Russian Mercedes". As in the case of the province governor it is used as an official car for higher-level bureaucrats.

the fields by putting a long stick into the soil (in order to control the washing out process because of soil salinity) while other people around him informed him of the situation, what has been done and what the scheduled steps for the coming harvest are. His presence was the signal of how serious the whole issue is (reaching plan target and proper cultivation techniques), while at the same time he embodies state power and displays that everything is under control. While he accompanying officials were part of the inspecting process, they were at the same time being inspected by others. Questions were asked, the soil was checked; it was checked if the fields were prepared on time or if seeds were ready to plant. The *tuman xokim's* daily power was also under surveillance but this visit was the surveillance of the surveillance. He did not stay as long as the preparations took, in less than an hour he had left with his convoy. After he left, people were relaxed again. Actually, according to my informants, his visit changes nothing in the way things are done. "He has to do these visits because otherwise he is reprimanded for not doing his job correctly". (Abdullah)

On the other hand, to visit a *xokim* is a difficult matter. The *xokimiyat* buildings in the *tuman* centre are easily recognizable everywhere with their usually four to five floors and front gardens. They have a very similar construction and painting style all over the country. Of course, symbols like the flag and the national emblem of Uzbekistan belong on the *xokimiyat's* building too. These buildings host different departments like women, youth or the land-register office. Each is headed by a vice-*xokim*. The *xokim's* office is usually located on the highest floor, has a different decoration and is generally in better shape. Visiting the *xokim* at his office and getting a chance to talk to him is not easy and the entering of his realm is highly regulated. His office is easily recognizable not only due to the decorations but also due to the number of officials who work for him. It was always possible to see people waiting to see the *xokim*. Usually, when trying to meet him, the *xokim* either has a never-ending meeting or is somewhere on a trip to the provincial capital or one of the kolkhoz. Like the similarity of the buildings, the reasons for his absence seemed to be the same, no matter which *tuman*. The chance to get into the *xokim's* office is limited. Usually, people are ordered to his office and only then allowed to enter his space. When I was waiting for him on many different occasions, it was not seldom that I had either to wait for a long time or that the appointments were cancelled (after waiting for one or three hours). If the *xokim* was not in his office, nobody knew when he would be back and

he was only reachable through his driver's phone.

Another means of control, as well as source of annoying, were the described inspections and endless meetings, which would often go on until midnight. All this is done in the name of cotton. That is where the money comes and goes; that is where the corruption nests. Moreover, by ordering *fermer* and kolkhoz chiefs to the *xokimiyat* for these meetings, they are also reminded where the power and authority lies. This is also the space where state politics are communicated; yet, individual innovation and opinions are not wanted. Communication between different bureaucratic levels also corresponds to this since the personal opinion of the individual is not asked. The state gives the plan and demands the corresponding economic performance. The duty of the individual, in this case the *fermer*, is to act on order rather than create new methods or solutions or to do things according to his intentions. Although this idea is transmitted at the meetings, at the same time these meetings boost *fermer* to find solutions to their problems. Their pedagogical value, however, is strongly contested and the ability of the chiefs questioned.

> "It's always the same, you are ordered to his office and they repeat and repeat the same things. Nothing new. You ask me why the meetings take so long? If they cannot say what they want to say in one sentence what shall I do? That is the reason they take hours and hours. Of course, sometimes there is new information but mostly, it is a waste of time." (Abror)

During my stay in the two research sites, neither *viloyat* nor *tuman xokim* made inspections in any other spheres, only in the fields. The quality of roads, of schools or medical stations is not inspected. While these kinds of public spaces are ignored, penetration into the private sphere happens. Besides the control of religiosity and restrictions in feasts this also includes other types of visits. Private households got unexpected visits in order to check the hygienic standards and housekeeping in the name of preventive medicine. Women are the prime subject of these visits as well as most of the visitors. Nurses from the medical point come and visit households, talk to women and check how clean the houses are kept and give them information on child caring and similar topics. They also register households and the notebook of the *ambulatorya* is updated with the persons who live in the household and their year of birth. Actually, this book, which is kept in the medical point, is the best resource for getting an overview of the whole village. Through these means a continuous

control and regulation is practiced. For this purpose it is not always a state actor who fulfils this duty, but a village elder can also do the job. The traditional position of respect and acknowledgement that old men have is assembled with the interests of the post-Soviet Uzbek state which uses these kinds of structures and let the elders act both directly and indirectly state agents (Dunn 2008 245).

6.4 State Interference and Perceptions

During the Soviet period, education, employment and medical care were all seen as natural rights of the citizens (cf. Verdery 1996: 28) and the paternalist state took over this responsibility. This was also part of state propaganda and citizens were made aware of it by public discourse. Although under the Soviet regime surveillance and control were part of daily life, citizens played an active role and influenced the flow of things, or manipulated politics according to their needs and benefits to some degree (Ledeneva 1998, Shlapentokh 1989). State domination was thus not static or impenetrable. This became obvious with the cotton scandal (cf. chapter 2). As it was made public in the end, it not only showed the power of the state but it was also one of the examples to show how things worked and how they had existed for years under the Soviet regime. Local state agents were working against the central state's interests and were cheating by delivering cotton only on paper.

Independence has not automatically produced completely new models of state-society-relationships. Rather, centre-periphery relations and their agents were and are deeply entangled. After independence, the new state with its new rules, regulations and available resources shaped its officials and gave them duties to fulfil. The way Tashkent appears in Bukhara and Andijon provinces and in the households of people, in their daily lives is another possibility to understand the state (cf. Shah, Alpa 2007:129).

Post-Soviet Uzbekistan is a combination of state expansion, continuity and withdrawal. Old practices remain as long as they serve the interests of the present cadre and help to keep them in power. However, the state withdraws from some spheres that simply lead to costs without immediate benefits, such as in education or in the public health sector. The Uzbek state did withdraw from many spheres, not necessarily because of neoliberal ideology, but rather because of its political and economic interests, and its incapability to afford

it. This withdrawal is financial but the state still exists as a control entity. If neo-liberalism is described as "... in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2005:2) then the Uzbekistan case is far from neoliberal practices. Since independence, the Uzbek state has not been able to "create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" and has also not "set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets" (ibid.). According to Harvey, state intervention must be avoided since certain interest groups can use it for their own benefit. That is absolutely the case in Uzbekistan where there is a withdrawal of the state from social provision but without privatization.

The transition period and its peculiar situation, which is the result of the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, is used to legitimize any kind of restriction and limitation in every realm of life. In the domestic discourse, the Uzbek state represents itself mainly in terms of guaranteeing law and order. Reference to economic success is not used as strong as one would expect. And cotton stories are not about reaching the world market but news is usually limited to domestic deliveries of the provinces. At least on a village level, much more is heard about law and order, especially in comparison to states like Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. This is the discourse that the Uzbek government makes use of in its propaganda to legitimize its regimes and techniques. Especially the Tajik civil war and the situation in Afghanistan are two cases that the Uzbek government uses to argue for ever more internal security measures. Sovereignty came with the dissolution of the Soviet Union but its citizens, who had been under the past regime, got used to this kind of restrictions and measures. The political aspects of sovereignty and its perception are for some people simply a change of power from Moscow to Tashkent. "At that time we did what Moscow ordered, now Tashkent decides." This transfer is not greeted by everybody due to the post-independence difficulties.

The Uzbek state produces and reproduces itself in everyday life in an inseparable relationship with society, in which the state's role and power is bargained and things done accordingly. In Uzbekistan, it is not unusual that mundane state practices which belong to daily life of state bureaucrats and or-

dinary people show this bargaining and after that "get the job done".[4] Besides explicit representations of the state, implicit practices are also relevant and shape the state's imagination. While the Uzbek government spends resources on the surveillance of political and religious affairs of individuals and *mahalla postpon* are in charge mostly for "peace and order", individual responsibility is demanded by the state for protecting one's private sphere, for example, in the case of burglary or animal theft. In this case individual responsibility is asked without giving any resources and support. It is like partially outsourcing state functions to individuals under the guise of self-responsibility, self-duty and voluntarism. Rose speaks of "de-statized" "social and regulatory operations of the state" and the role of "quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations" in that process (Rose 1996b:56, Gupta & Ferguson 2002:989). When people mention that the past had less criminality and burglary (of private things, not state resources) and that today "we cannot expect everything from the state, we should do something too", it does not mean that post-independence is "a matter of less government" but rather that the "responsibilization" of citizens is there and asks for more self-discipline (Gupta & Ferguson 2002:989). It is not rare to hear and to see the motto "ozungi ozun sakla" (protect yourself). Controlling many aspects of private life is seen as part of governing right but other needs of citizens necessitate self-engagement and responsibility.

One highly illustrative case for this state-society relationship is the *propiska*[5] regime, inherited from the Soviet Union, which still continues to exist in Uzbekistan. As with other issues this is an example where the state takes measures openly and directly influencing the decision-making of individuals. The internal passport system is one of these mechanisms. The control of urban growth and population movement by the *propiska* system aimed at keeping people away from cities and allowing them limited access to related resources. Tashkent has been a restricted city since 1956 while Moscow and Leningrad were since 1931. On the one hand passport and the *propiska* regime were introduced for population management and "elimination of unorganized migration". Yet, on the other hand, socialism as a system was not confronted with an unorganized migration problem, so in contrast to mass capitalist migration there was no need to leave the countryside (Buckley 1995:897).[6]

[4] Stark (1996:994-95) uses this phrase in order to show that the demise of the socialist regime and its formal structures does not lead to an institutional vacuum.

[5] Russian for 'residence permission'

[6] "Clear in the language of the decree, the intended role for passports and residence

The ending of collectives led to the end of social guarantees so the cities became more attractive to migrate to and rural areas became less attractive to stay. The dissolution of collective farms, loss of income and social security led to people seeking jobs either in the cities, especially in Tashkent, or out of the country. Urban settings with diverse economic activities offer more income sources than rural settings but these are also quite limited. Huge number of "unemployed" ex-collective workers started to work legally or illegally in other countries and depending on their legal status are again exposed to spatial governmentality. The Uzbek government aims not only to maintain urban order but also tries to keep rural order and economic productivity by keeping labour power in its place. Cotton as a valuable cash crop necessitates cheap labour power, and self-sufficiency of workers is more guaranteed in rural areas than in urban space.

Today, internal passports are an essential part of daily life and are carried by men in their shirt pocket. Very often they are required as for bureaucratic work or during internal militsia checks within or between provinces.[7] Circumventing restrictions was and still is a part of daily life for many people. I met people in Tashkent who were struggling to get their *propiska* through legal or illegal ways and they had been waiting and struggling for many years for this status. Acquiring *propiska* through illegal avenues necessitates connections and a sum of money for bribery. It was a kind of never ending story and some people were waiting for their promised *propiska* by paying again and again (cf. Buckley 19995: 908).[8]

Especially in Tashkent, young men are often subjected to passport controls and harassments by the militsia, which lead them to avoid public spaces, like the metro and bazaar where controls are often carried out. Young bearded men are seen as particularly suspicious and candidates for a document check. If it turns out that he is from the Ferghana Valley, he is also a candidate for

permits in regulating population was twofold: to keep account of the population (presumably for planning purposes) and to regulate the movement of "undesirables" such as criminals and kulaks" (Buckley 1995:902). Passports contained information like a person's identity, address, marriage and children. Buckley mentions also how this system was used for the purpose "... to distribute scarce social services, such as housing and employment" (ibid:903).

[7] I found it interesting that women did not carry their passports with them in daily life if there was not a certain reason like travelling or getting documents from government offices. Men who spend more time in public and are also very often controlled by militsia had their passports always with them.

[8] Besides bribing, to marry somebody from Tashkent, or marry in name only, also helps to get residence permission.

further interrogation. Individuals are predicted who might be dangerous and picked out. Some perceive the existence of the militsia as security provider and danger reducer. The first aim is to keep people away from urban settings and from certain spaces like markets and public transport so that their mobility and their access to economic and public life is limited. They should not participate or benefit from certain spaces or it should be risky for them if they try. These people develop their own strategies either by avoiding these places as much as possible, or by trying to find alternatives. Using the metro in rush hours helps them to intermingle in the crowd but they can also use the bus as an alternative.

While coming from the valley and living without *propiska* in Tashkent can stigmatise somebody as "dangerous" or "fundamentalist", in their place of origin it is not necessarily so. Controlling mobility means to determine inclusion and exclusion, which is again done in the name of order and peace. The main purpose is to exclude disadvantaged people (of rural origin or from less developed regions) from certain resources by refusing them access to certain spaces. Despite not being criminal, people are simply excluded from certain places. The government does not care why people use the urban environment and what their push and pull factors are. Rural people, despite not actually being criminals, are basically illegalised as the state controls the urban space. How successful these mechanisms are, and whether they make people actually stay in their village is a subject for another research. Buckley also argues that "... only a slight influence" of these restrictions was to observe on "aggravate urbanization patterns and migration flows" (1995: 896). These administrative means were not enough to keep migrants at home and save the urban space and the resources for its inhabitants.

The *propiska* system is composed of control and punishment, aiming at security and the inclusion and exclusion of people from spaces as well as access to corresponding resources. It allows the Uzbek government to expand its control on its citizens and illegality becomes a very easy to achieve but serious issue. Being subject to official approval means nothing more than to be registered and under control. The regulation of population movement and urban growth is thus an important control mechanism of post-Soviet governance in Uzbekistan. Controlling urban spaces remains a useful recipe for dealing with post-Soviet problems or to keep them away from the centre leading to a more positive visual image of the city and thus a more positive image of the gov-

ernment. Managing populations for both economic and political purposes still plays an important role and this old Soviet system is still kept in service. In order to maintain political and economic power, there is no need for the Uzbek government to abandon the *propiska* and the internal passport system. The *propiska* and passport system does not fulfil any direct purpose for the city population but has a stabilizing function in that it keeps problems away by managing those spaces. People living in the same country belong to different spaces and have different functions to fulfil, such as picking cotton. Keeping the rural population in rural areas means keeping problems in their place, since movement to urban areas not only causes urban problems but also makes the problems public and visible.

Another sphere where state-society relations become obvious is NGOs. In Uzbekistan, NGOs and other civil society organizations, foreign research institutes and foreign development projects have limited possibilities throughout the whole country. There is little space left for institutions and information sources since they are seen as a danger to the state and its authority. Keeping them under supervision, closing and threatening their members is a means of narrowing their operational space. The Uzbek government's relation to international organizations on governmental level is also not easy.[9] A spectrum of institutions and organisations like the IMF, ILO, Worldbank, OSI, WTO, national institutions such as the German Goethe Institute, or foundations which engaged in democratization processes, are often faced with bureaucratic barriers and have difficulties getting or extending their diplomatic accreditation in Uzbekistan. Efforts of international organizations to force the Uzbek government to do "good governance", concerning for example privatization and currency conversion, was not as effective as expected. There are numerous reports and information about the workings of Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch and their problems to work in Uzbekistan. These kinds of organizations have nothing to give or donate except disturb the peace, which makes their existence endurable.

The case of Gulnoza, which is described in chapter four, shows a remarkable challenge to the state authority. It was a coincidence that the German GTZ had an agricultural development project in my research site in which informative events were organized in order to advise and teach *fermer* about their legal rights. The person responsible for the project complained about the

[9] See more on NGOs in Uzbekistan in Berg (2004).

difficulties to work in Uzbekistan in general. He mentioned that on the local level the authorities cannot forbid this kind of events since they are approved by Tashkent but using their own means *tuman* and *viloyat* authorities prevent people from joining the meetings. Although the focus group was *fermer* most of the participants were not *fermer* but were people who were obliged to participate as "puppets" for making a crowd. They were sent by the kolkhoz to join the meetings. The activities of the organization were strictly supervised. Allowing some of these organizations to operate was necessary for the image of the Uzbek government but teaching *fermer* their legal rights was definitely not what the Uzbek government appreciates or wants.[10] However, these organizations, for example the GTZ, not only spread information, but also provided the kolkhoz with new cottonseed, new technologies and new technical equipment as part of their projects. Because of this kind of benefits the unwished aspects of these events and organizations are also tolerated. During their stay in the village, events like teaching *fermer* about their legal rights and similar subjects were continuously interrupted by serving food, the absence of the person responsible from the *tuman*, or by waiting for somebody who had the necessary equipment. The organizer was just frustrated and tired at the end of the event because of the lack of engagement by the Uzbek side. On the other hand, allowing the GTZ to inform *fermer* about their legal rights does not mean they are also enabled to use them.

6.5 The Uzbek State and its Borders

It is not my intention here to give a detailed border study and ethnography. Yet, borders became an important aspect of this study during my fieldwork, and maybe even more in the aftermath of it, during data analyses. Uzbekistan is a country with internal and international borders. It is almost unavoidable to study this issue to a certain extent, as there is a continuous border crossing as well as a strong symbolic meaning to them. As Migdal also points out: "Borders shift; they leak; and they hold varying sorts of meaning for different people" (2004:5) – this is the case with Uzbek borders.

For instance, *viloyat* borders are marked by huge metal boards. These are

[10] One would think that it does not matter whether *fermer* know their rights or not, since they cannot ask for it. That is true. However, a pile of legal complaints is also not wished for.

not only decorated – mostly with cotton drawings – but also labelled with signs, which welcome and see off travellers wishing them a safe journey. These metal boards are supported by a *schlagbaum*.[11] With a few armed officials the picture of the *viloyat* border checkpoint is completed. Cars and trucks are stopped, contents and passports checked, and questions asked: "Where are you coming from?" "Where are you going to?" "What are you going to do there?" An international border checkpoint does not look very different – a couple of border guards arguing with a crowd of people. The atmosphere at the international borders was more nervous and people looked even more stressed out. The point is that in Uzbekistan one is regularly reminded of the existence of (different kinds of) border.

While state borders are becoming obsolete for some parts of the world (Wilson and Donnan 1998:1), they started to become more important in others. In Central Asia they have become barriers to the movement and flow of goods and people. Borders and border politics after independence have direct consequences for people's lives - politics that are the consequence of different economic and political agendas of the respective state. After 1991 people had the idea that the system that had locked people in for decades would disappear and allow them to enjoy the freedom of movement. But the years after showed rather a different tendency and locked people in again, although in a different way. The demise of the old system did not abolish the borders. Rather, the external borders of the Soviet Union became more open but the internal ones less so. The expected opening of the borders was quite complex in reality since the "closed" borders of the past – the iron curtain – are not entirely "open" today and the open borders of today are not open in the sense of the past.[12]

In the 1920's the then new borders nominally made people subjects of different Soviet republics. However, a border in that sense did not exist and did not separate them. The Kyrgyz, Turkmen or Kazak borders were not perceived as "real" borders in the past but gave people rather a feeling of being part of a big union and territory. As described earlier, with the usage of "language of nationality" (Hirsch 2000: 216) in the 1920's, a discussion and interaction began with the state and in many cases people bargained about

[11] Schlagbaum (barrier) is a German word, which was borrowed into Russian and is also widely used in Central Asian languages.

[12] see Gainsborough (2009) for a similar discussion on South Asia

which side of the border they wanted to belong to. The real borders were between the Soviet Union and other states, with other economic and political agendas, as Iran, Turkey or China. These, however, had no relevance in the daily life of people. For my interview partners, the border was somewhere out there, far away from them. Of course people were aware of the limits of the Soviet Union and travel restrictions but today it does not seem any better than in the past. Economically, many of them cannot afford to travel abroad; even within their own country it is difficult. One positive aspect often mentioned is that „. . . people like you, people from foreign countries can now travel to Uzbekistan." This is something new and seen as a positive aspect of independence.

The demise of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian republics made these borders a de jure and de facto thing. Now, administrative boundaries became state borders. Being confronted with this sudden and new "border feeling" affected people's lives very directly. Uzbekistan has borders with four other Central Asian republics with each multiple meanings and significances. Since then, a *schlagbaum* has not only come to be between two independent states, it is also found between plan and market economies. So not only does it indicate a border, it also draws a line between limits and possibilities of one or the other side.

Thus, real borders, depending on what they separate, started to shape the lives of people. This is seen as a "step back" by people. With independence, perception became different; feeling of being stuck, restricted within borders, which were open in the past and are closed now, makes things more difficult to accept than the other way around. At that time, ending up on the other side did not have much economic, political and social consequences. Since 1991, a separation emerged and a "real ending up on the wrong side" had serious consequences for people. Of course, whether the "wrong side" is actually that, depends on the eye of the beholder. Today people are not able to enjoy freedom of movement, not only due to financial reasons but also due to the restrictions of the Uzbek government and mutual visa regulations.[13]

After independence, republican borders symbolized a variety of state pow-

[13] Another aspect of the "opening of the borders" has to do with the quality of circulated goods. As mentioned before in chapter four, as a result of independence and the demise of Soviet Union it became possible to get goods from other countries, but people felt betrayed with the junk that soon arrived. "Now we have lots of things from abroad but the quality is bad".

ers and politics. A debate began concerning the control of borders, their defence and the defence of rights and sovereignty. Borders as "lines dividing spaces as represented on maps" became boundaries "... at which the way things are done changes, at which "we" end and "they" begin, at which certain rules for behaviour no longer obtain and others take hold" (Migdal 2004:5). In my field context, within the Soviet Union there was no "we" or "they" difference regarding the economic and political policies of the republics. These things were done or should be done according to one model in the same manner. Concerning how things are done, "we" Uzbeks compared to "they" Kyrgyz or Turkmens have always had a border without having boundaries (cf. Barth 1969). These boundaries are now strengthened with real borders, which symbolize division, independence and otherness. And borders mean more than lines on the maps; they divide different political and economic systems parallel to socially constructed boundaries.

In 1991 the existing borderline brought the necessity of a new organization of space. Everyday life, economic and social relations had to be rethought. In fact, social distinctions existed before the boundaries were drawn while the economic meaning of the borders developed only after 1991. Things have changed with the existence of the borders and what people make out of it differs in relation to their social and economic situation. A border is a fact of life and one has to deal with it out of necessity. Being for or against the borders is highly related to who has an advantage and disadvantage of it.

There has been certain continuity with Soviet times, but the borders have also been shaped by the new politics of independence of inclusion, exclusion and the coexistence of others within the same territory. Since the actual creation of the borders, as a marker of separation of space and people as citizens of different states with different political and economic agendas, more "we" and "they" has been produced. Independence made people of the same ethnic groups and members of the same family citizens of different states. The instrumentalisation of ethnicity is not uncommon in daily life and not limited to a certain geographical area or historical period. If done though, it should be necessary, meaningful and effective. Concerning ethnic identity, people take their Soviet past as a reference point in order to deal with the present situation. At the same time, concerns about the border have emotional, social, economic or spatial and practical aspects. Some people have started to think about their daughters who married and stayed on the other side, some are

concerned about their brothers and sisters, while others about superior market conditions or grazing sites on the other side of the border. The emergence of a physical border with its porosity still allowed people certain things like family visits or making ends meet while the latter may be risky, yet still often better than the possibilities at home.

My two fieldwork settings each border with one former Soviet Union republic, namely Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. In two research settings, the meaning of borders differs from each other significantly. This meaning also determines the attitude towards borders. The village in the Fergana Valley was just a few kilometres away from the Kyrgyz border, while the one in Bukhara was located in the inner part of the *viloyat*, some 50 kilometres from Turkmenistan. Two settings, two borders with different characteristics. Different reasons, ranging from local, national, geographical, social to historical ones, all play an important role in border issues.

Although the Bukhara *viloyat* has a border to Turkmenistan, it is seen as quite irrelevant for economic and political reasons. This is an opinion also held in Turkmen settlements. In this point ethnicity does not play a role since it does not have an orientation value. In Romitan there are hardly any border crossings to Turkmenistan. Yet the geographical distance to the border is not decisive. In Bukhara, borders are merely seen as a symbol of an independent sovereign state, which is to be protected and controlled against smugglers and terrorists, and which also separates things that do not belong together. Its existence is not seen as an obstacle for daily life or for economic survival.[14] After 1991, the population of Bukhara *viloyat* was not really concerned or affected by this new situation since they were neither separated from their kin and relatives nor did Turkmenistan offer any real economic or political alternative to Uzbekistan. For the Tajiks and Uzbeks of Bukhara not only is the border to Turkmenistan perceived as far away, but also there are many "cultural" distances. More than distance is the lack of networks a significant aspect in this context. Networks are created especially through marriage and this has not been the case in Bukhara. If marriages occur in a narrow radius this means it is marriage to kin and in close distances and thus it is not surprising that there are no networks in a wide range. In the aforementioned context the local Turkmens who have lived in the region for a long time (cf.

[14] The Turkmen border in Karakalpakistan, by contrast, has a completely different meaning, socially and economically (cf. Finke 2006).

Finke 2006) are also seen as different to the Turkmens of Turkmenistan. They are "our" Turkmens. But at the same time they are also different than "us", that is Tajiks and Uzbeks, due to their language and cultural habits. There are existing prejudices against the Turkmens of Turkmenistan that can be summed up along the nomadic-sedentary line.

But other border regions like the one to Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan play an important role not only in social aspects but also in economic ones. Both sides of these borders are populated by Uzbeks in addition to the titular groups. Although the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border separates two countries with a remarkable economic asymmetry, plan versus market, after the demise of the Soviet Union economic and political connectedness to the rest of the world only became possible through the Kyrgyz side of the border for many people. As mentioned before, my stay in the Ferghana Valley was not intended to be spent on studying borders as a main focus of the fieldwork but it was an inevitable and visible part of everyday life that contrasts strongly to Bukhara. Beyond the symbolic meaning of the border there were direct consequences for people on the spot. Challenging borders is the case in the valley since there are established social relations and places, which have played an important role in the life of people over time. People have oriented themselves beyond the border long before independence. This orientation has gained a new impetus after independence due to different economic systems and profiting from them but also because of other possibilities that one side of the border offers.

The Kyrgyz in the valley are a case in particular. They do not consider themselves living on the right or wrong side in respect to their ethnic belonging, since they had been living there for a long time. They had established stronger cultural connections with and similarities to Uzbeks than to Kyrgyz of other parts of Kyrgyzstan. Especially when they travel in the direction of Bishkek they, so I was told, feel completely alien. In neighbourhoods close to the border, many Kyrgyz went to school in Kyrgyzstan up until independence. While dividing two different ethnic groups, at the same time the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border separates co-ethnics from each other thus marking sameness and otherness among inter and intra-ethnic groups. While sometimes ignored and sometimes stressed, the border has a significant power as a unifying or separating line. For many years after independence people continued to live without the dividing aspect of the borders and maintained their socio economic relations with the other side as if it were an extension of their own. Marriage practices kept

relations alive and became a kind of motor for future perspectives.

The relationship between centre and periphery is different than in non-border areas or at borders with "non-significant" countries like Turkmenistan. In that context, similar to Heyman's work on the Mexico-USA border (Heyman 1994: 51-9), "border areas [have to] be seen as a particular kind of local, politically organised ecology" (Wilson and Donnan 1998:6). Uzbek borders and their realities are only traceable when the policies, actions and failures of both states are taken into consideration, since the borders with Kazakstan or Kyrgyzstan compared with Turkmenistan are indeed different. In fact, this system produces additional borders. In Bukhara, people have nothing to do with the border, neither economically nor socio-culturally, so for them the state discourse of keeping terrorists out of the country and keeping the wealth of the country inside seems plausible and realistic. In the valley, the border has an everyday relevance and people make their ends meet through the border. Furthermore, relatives are also separated by the border. So for them, daily life and its realities forces them to deal with the border in order to reach resources, relatives or other facilities.

While differences were stressed and made clear to the other side of the border in Bukhara, similarities to others were mentioned in the valley. Locality here does not stop at the border while in Bukhara it is more limited in space. Not only are goods crossing the border but there is also an identification with the other side. A collective understanding of being from the valley and being part of this "civilisation", with its Tajik or Kyrgyz minorities, survived independence due to the importance of locality in the Uzbek context that unites Uzbeks from Andijon closer with those from Osh than with those from Bukhara.

Borders are the places where the state performs "power" and "control" but also where this power is challenged. Discourse on control of territory, the political system and resources are used to legitimize authority and surveillance in and on the edges of the country. Territorial unity, having a secular system, no civil war and keeping the wealth of the country in the country are the basic arguments of the Karimov regime and so every good citizen is to have sympathy and understanding for the security measures. While perhaps not to the same extent but in a similar way as Bornstein argues in relation to the West Bank, the Green Line also shapes everyday life and how people use opportunities to make a living (Bornstein 2003: ix).

Policing, next to national ones, internal borders is an especially strong reminder of state power to its citizens. Uzbekistan has a *schlagbaum* "border effect" that people regularly encounter. In that respect it is not so much separating geographies and policies but the extending of state writ as far as possible in order to make people feel the "state". On the other hand, to be "forgotten" by the state in Uzbekistan is not only a feeling felt by citizens along the border, since the "empowerment" of citizens and the denial of access to resources is not limited to the margins of the country.

6.6 Making Use of Borders: Legally and Illegally

Borders have created new restrictions, but new opportunities have also arisen. In this respect, the meaning of their existence as a part of daily life in both settings is quite different. This is not merely related to the settings' distance to the border. It is more than geographic distance, since if a border is considered and seen as an opportunity, no matter how far, how dangerous it is to pass it, people will struggle to cross it. A single reason or a bundle of many different reasons can push people to cross borders. Some people stay long on the other side of the border and some do not. One may cross it due to economic or political reasons, some cross it in order to visit relatives or a wedding party and some to visit holy places. If people think they will profit from crossing the border, then they will – no matter how dangerous it is. Borders, like lost jobs or unpaid salaries, brought one of the significant changes in peoples' lives. Some of them were confronted more directly and intensively than others.

But in order to cross it and to do so regularly, one side of the border should offer something the other does not. Briefly, there is no reason to cross the border to Turkmenistan from the perspective of my Bukhara filed site residents.[15] When two separate countries resemble each other economically and politically, there is no special value from the border. The situation on the Uzbek and Kyrgyz border is completely different. National economic and

[15] In the Khorezm province the situation is different. Here, the residence of co-ethnics and relatives on both sides of the border makes travelling back and forth for weddings and funerals highly relevant for everyday life although it is often mentioned that the Turkmen side is quite well patrolled. Economic aspects are of secondary importance in comparison to kinship relations. People smuggle fuel but do not cross the border as labourers (cf. Finke 2006).

political developments in Uzbekistan have an impact on both internal and international border regulations where local communities need to find a way to deal with. From political refugees to ordinary smugglers this border offers a large spectrum of possibilities in contrast to the Turkmen border. One of the main reasons is differences in property rights and economic opportunities.

> "If you pass the canal, things are different. To the Kyrgyz the land is divided and privatised. They do not work anymore. It is Uzbeks from here who go there and take care of the trees, water them and pick the fruits. The crops are shared according to an agreement. You can bring your share home with you, and the traders come to your home and they sell it again. Some people became rich by working for Kyrgyz, renting their land and working it." (Sharzod)

A flourishing border economy or making ends meet via border crossings are, in the words of Heyman, more related to "local ecology" rather than to "advantages of physical geography" (1994:51). In the case of the Ferghana Valley, it is the co-existence of two economic systems and the overlapping ethnic composition on both sides of the border. Both, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks have kin relationships across the border, which may help work and trade arrangements. In the current economic situation smuggling into and out of Kyrgyzstan is one of the most important components of the survival. Another option is to dislocate the income resource completely beyond the national borders, namely to Kyrgyzstan, without chancing the place of residence. Some Uzbeks work there as daily labourers, while others stay for longer time periods. Picking one kilo of cotton in Kyrgyzstan is paid 1,5 times more than in Uzbekistan. In 2002, per day it was possible to earn up to 1500 to 2000 *sum*. Spending one week there one was able to end up with a huge amount of money for Uzbekistan standards.

Besides this flexible daily basis employment, getting some piece of land from the owner and working it by oneself is another option for some. Some Uzbeks leased land up to 300 hectare. In this case, the owner provides technical support and a tractor. The arrangements are in the form of share-cropping but conditions can be very different. The advantage for the labour migrants is that the produce can be sold on the free market in Kyrgyzstan. Earning money in Kyrgyzstan and spending it in Uzbekistan is seen as a particularly lucrative option because living conditions are cheaper. In fact, however, Uzbeks from Uzbekistan are working primarily on the fields of ethnic Kyrgyz. Occasionally

co-ethnics are offering jobs but relatives were not mentioned as employer. The reason was also clear for the commuters because "as nomads Kyrgyz lack of skills of agriculture and have the Uzbeks work for them".

Many activities along the border can be defined as illegal and the centre is concerned about these illegalities but the maintenance of political order requires it to turn a blind eye in that respect. This is partly due to the fact that provinces are put in competition to one another, especially when it comes to achieving the "cotton plan". Movements of goods within Uzbekistan from one province to another represents inter-border smuggle; it is considered "stealing the wealth of the nation" in that case "the wealth of the *viloyat*" or "the success of the *viloyat*". Taking cotton and wheat out of the *viloyat* is seen as treason to the *viloyat* and smuggling beyond national border is regarded as treason to the nation.

"Kyrgyzstan is a poor country, and it is not my job to look after people. Everyday five thousand people come from Osh to Andijon - if each of them would buy a loaf of bread, there would not be enough left for my people". These are the words of president Karimov on TV (cited in: Megoran 2005:727). I was also often told by people that border controls were necessary in order to keep the "wealth of the nation". Furthermore, as a marker of the extent of the state, some borders are occasionally closed in order to remind both countries' citizens of its power. So, in one sense, the uncertainty leads people to take risks because they just don't know what may happen the next day. The way the Uzbek state defines and controls its territory and population by drawing borders and checkpoints follows the same logic. Being present in everyday life through checkpoints, controls, and documents or through a modest degree of social support is the main agenda of the regime. The border areas are affected to the same extent as the centre. These are all done under protectionist and paternalist reasons for the well-being of its subjects.

On the other hand, it is understandable even for state officials that people need this option to secure a living. With the help of bribery, border crossings are not a big issue. Of course, if one does so on a daily basis there are problems and arbitrariness but most of the time by paying some sum of money it is sold. "If you pay, you can always cross the border. If you pay enough, even a truck can pass the border with whatever goods you have." (Timur) According to informants the border militsiya knows who, how often and for which purpose crosses the border. Depending of these criteria, the amount of money

to be paid is calculated mutually. Of course, there were days when controls are tighter and the border less permeable. Both guards and commuters are thus related within an illegal exchange system. There were no serious complains about the border guards in contrast to other migrants' experiences who send remittances from Russia or Kazakstan. Commuting on a daily basis and creating an acquaintanceship with border guards enables trust and even some emotional attachment to develop. Each side knows the rules of the game', so that people know how to behave during border crossings. This includes to know how much to give, how much to take, and how much to forward to ones superiors.

Still, border crossing is an exhausting act, especially carrying goods from one side to the other. Of course, the payments at the border are seen as a sacrifice but as a worthy one. Commuters were most of the time not using the word "bribe" rather they were describing the moment of illegality. Their expression when crossing the border is "*gaplaship otush mumkin*", meaning to talk one's way across the border. This *gaplaship* is a process which starts with polite greetings and continuous by bargaining and negotiating on the sum to be paid. Nevertheless, disputes at the border belong to everyday life in the Fergana Valley and crossing them is an everyday struggle. People accept them to some degree since they happen regularly and the people know what is waiting for them. Of course, the Kyrgyz primarily blame the Uzbek border guards and the Uzbeks the Kyrgyz ones, but it is also not rare for people to complain about their own border personnel. Going to the market, visiting relatives, smuggling goods or going to a wedding can all be travel reasons but it does not necessarily mean that people get different treatment according to their travel purpose. In fact, a smuggler can be treated better than a wedding guest since many factors play an important role during checks. Sometimes soldiers act as bullies and harass people without any reason. Regular border crossers are more experienced and know how to deal with the soldiers and their wishes. Smuggling of essential goods and natural resources necessitates another expertise, competence or knowledge since it is not the business of ordinary people. In a similar way, smuggling goods in large amounts – by truck – needs another negotiation power than daily bag carriers. Leaving Uzbek territory and entering Kyrgyzstan, and doing so regularly is not only tiring but it also necessitates skills for dealing with custom officers irrespective of whether they are co-ethnics or not. That is "why it is not everybody's thing

to do", as I was told.

Also women as daily workers or small traders often begged at the border that they had to get their goods to the other side since they need to support their families and feed their children. This gender aspect is very often used when the men did not get enough sympathy from officials. On the Cambodian-Thai border, Cambodian women were "emphasising their sameness" with Thais, even though they belong to different nationalities (Kusakabe, 2009:69; see also Tsuneishi 2005). On the Kyrgyz –Uzbek border where both sides have a similar ethnic configuration, arguing in that sense is not difficult, also due to mutual linguistic competency. Both sides of the border are inhabited by co ethnics and there is a strong relationship between them. Weddings and funerals are also constantly used as arguments. These border movements also necessitate things other than bribes or gifts. Creating a kind of sympathy, affinity and solidarity is a key for crossing the border. A reference point is sought and is intensively used in order to make border checks a little easier. Everybody has a similar but also slightly different story to overcome border harassments, like earning "bread money" for children or having sick family members and needing money for their treatment. Some of these stories are true, some of them are not, but they all make border crossings possible and profitable.

Those border soldiers who are from different parts of the country are not always susceptible for these kin arguments. On the other hand, it is also obvious that there is not a real intention to stop people at the border besides a few exemplary cases in which the power of the state is represented. Although the state watches and regulates the "affairs" along the border, and continues to tighten border crossings, mobility continues in a way. The Uzbek–Kyrgyz border gained a meaning that did not exist to the same extent in the past and began to offer some options to its residents, for instance in economic aspects. The cards have just been dealt here and the residents of Marxamat need to find other income resources besides the limited kolkhoz land usage. The border became the heart of things in Marxamat, as a problem and a solution. As Green points out, "Marginality, too, can become part of the heart of things, precisely because of its asserted marginalization in relation to the heart of the things" (2005:2).

It is here that people open themselves to the market economy in Kyrgyzstan. Work in Kyrgyzstan also means insecurity of job and payments. Legal or illegal, the weak bargaining position of border crossers exposes them to any

kind of exploitation. Still, people are better paid and have more options than at home. While the Uzbek government creates the push factors, at the same time it enables the conditions of exploitation for its beloved citizens at and beyond the border. For people in Marxamat, there are many reasons to turn to Kyrgyzstan especially in the post-independence period. When crossing the border it means accepting the conditions on the other side. Border crossing and seeking ones livelihood in Kyrgyzstan is, for different reasons, not a solution for everybody. Although some Tajik villages in Marxamat are also located directly at the border, they do not engage border crossings as much as Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. One reason for that is the absence of co-ethnics on the other side.

Considering the situation after 1991 with unemployment, irregularly paid or insufficient salaries, borders not only offered Uzbeks an opportunity for survival, but also for local officials the chance to fulfil their economic goals. While the border secures "bread money" for many, others, like people involved in the cotton business, make huge profits through smuggle since the border helps to fulfil the cotton plan in Andijon *viloyati*. Sometimes, what is smuggled to the other side of the border, in order to sell at world market prices, is bought again locally in order to fulfil the plan. Barter between states or provinces is another possibility to achieve that.

Smuggling is not limited to international border crossings. Omida lives in Kuva, a city located in the neighbouring province Fergana but not far from Marxamat. The road from Marxamat to Kuva has a small checkpoint at the *viloyat* border. For frequent travellers this checkpoint is nothing more than a place to greet soldiers and officers, but less frequent travellers must stop and show their documents and open their car trunk – a usual procedure at every province border. It is not very common, however, to see a woman behind the steering wheel, especially in a microbus, a Damas. Omida is in her mid-forties, energetic and talkative. She drives from Kuva to Marxamat regularly in order to collect *pilyonka*, which is her business and income resource. She buys used and unused *pilyonka* from kolkhozcu and takes them to Kuva to resell them or make plastic bags from them. Since cottonseeds are planted under *pilyonka* in the *viloyat* of Andijon, but not in Ferghana, there is always a bulk of used and unused available. Kolkhozcu have easy access to this resource since *pilyonka* removed from the fields are not returned to the kolkhoz. Furthermore they also have access to unused material, which is sold to Omida (one kilo for 1200 *sum*). Thus, similar to Soviet times, using state resources in one's own interest

(Verdery 1996) is still a valid option to make a profit. Using state resources for private business enterprises is hardly uncommon and nobody thinks twice about it. Transporting *pilyonka* and crossing province checkpoints is possible through bribes but Omida also says that, "they know me and let me pass." Personnel change at the border crossings necessitates new arrangements and requires introducing herself to the new guards so the routine gets back on track. She talked with an ease and carelessness, which showed she had complete confidence in what she was doing.

Besides their function as a survival strategy for many people, border crossings also have a "relaxing effect" despite all the problems, frictions and tensions. It is a kind of valve – not only for the people but for the Karimov regime as well. I would argue that what happens at the border does not happen because borders are on the margins of state control and represent a "weak periphery", but because the "strong centre" has its own agenda and intentionally keeps the border weak or strong in order to secure its survival. The flow of untaxed goods is basically accepted since the border represents a main income source for people neglected by the incumbent regime. In daily life, restrictions along the border are due to different reasons – sometimes a local incident caused by a cow or somebody getting caught while crossing the border, and sometimes because of tensions between governments.[16]

Thus, what happens at the border does not undermine state authority, rather it is known and a blind eye is turned on it. People expect the state to show the same authority and restrictions in different spheres for different citizens. In the end, this flexibility allows the regime to survive. Allowing different degrees of control for different issues in different places is the survival strategy of the Uzbek government, not its "weakness". Furthermore, different forms of state action sometimes do not appear as state actions at all (Walker 2009:108, Das and Pole 2004, Ong 2005). While introducing new rules and penetrating private spheres of citizens by different kinds of regulation, like scheduling wedding feasts, on the other hand unexpected flexibility like condoning illegal border crossings and smuggling gives a fuzzy image of the state.

In that case, marginality means lying at the margins of state territory and being difficult to reach geographically. According to my informants, during

[16] Megoran and Reeves have published extensively on border issues between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in the Ferghana Valley (Megoran 2002, 2004, 2006; Reeves 2007). Their work describes in detail ethnographically the space of border and people's everyday practices.

the Soviet period the areas were more oriented towards Kyrgyzstan and not to the centre of their own republic. Bazaars in Kyrgyzstan – in particular the city of Osh – were the orientation points. Although after independence places became more difficult to reach, the direction of orientation did not change due to many reasons. Connectedness to Kyrgyzstan actually makes the Marxamat people marginal for Tashkent but they are occasionally better off in economic terms. At the same time, Uzbeks as border crossers represent a marginal group in Kyrgyzstan because of their insecure working and living situation. Their detachment from the centre connects them more to a global economic and political system than being in centre but they are also marginalised where they are connected in this case in Kyrgyzstan.

After 1991, the border regime started to function in terms of separation and restrictions of movements. It is also the same border regime that allowed for the establishment of border economies as a compensation of the state's failing abilities. Connectedness to co-ethnics, relatives and to the world market exists along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border – and that in every aspect: religious, ethnic, kinship and economic from local to global. This border allows people to go and visit the mosques freely, and if needed to use the Kyrgyz contingent for *hajj* (cf. chapter 7.1). Thus, by crossing the border via Kyrgyzstan, not only economic but also religious connectedness to the rest of the "Islamic" world is made possible. Crossing the border is a kind of experience that confronts reality in Uzbekistan and does not necessarily correspond to the state discourse or TV news. In Marxamat, many people had the chance to see and question their own state in relation to Kyrgyzstan while in Bukhara "belief in the state" still played an important role.

Chapter 7

Ideological Strategies: Views on Modernity, the State and Religion

7.1 Introduction

One common view on post-socialist societies is that their fall left people with an ideological vacuum, which is not easy to fill. This is grounded in the idea that state socialism was an overarching and all-encompassing ideology that had replaced traditional worldviews such as religion. After its disappearance, people would therefore have to look for alternatives to guide their lives and social interrelations.

Islam plays a key role in this. While Uzbeks try to perform and carry out rituals and ceremonies as a part of their religious duty, for most of them it does not determine their daily lives. Independence is a chance to learn and to talk more about religion, yet it also has its own new limits. In people's minds, there is no doubt that an Uzbek is a Muslim anyway. And although many perceive of themselves (and others) as not particularly good Muslims, there is always the chance to become one. This process demands time and knowledge, meaning that one can acquire that status at a certain age when enough free time is available and one is taken care of by one's children who take over the stress of making ends meet. The insecurity of the post-Soviet order did not lead many people to seek comfort or solutions in religion. Religion is far more a regulator of behaviour or an approval of certain attitudes concerning the different spheres of life. Not only religion, but also other spheres of life are under state control and this makes the remembrance of the past a positive

experience in many respects.

This ideological search, if there actually does happen to be one, obviously takes place against the backdrop of the Soviet legacy and its ideas on modernity, religion and the role of the state. This chapter will therefore begin with a look at the attitudes people have towards the former system and how they contrast that system with the contemporary state of Uzbekistan. Issues of modernity and civilization play a prominent role in this respect and also inform peoples' understanding of the future. I will then analyse the place of Islam in contemporary society as well as the usage that some individuals make out of it's revival before turning to everyday practices. The chapter concludes with a look at future perspectives and ideas about modernity.

7.2 Discourses on State, Modernity and the Ideological Vacuum

The idea of a *homo sovieticus* , free of traditional values and religious blindness, was a powerful one, although it did not translate as heavily into everyday life as socialist engineers had hoped for or in the way that western Sovietologists wrote about it. In fact, when remembering the previous period, socialist ideals play a relatively small role. Rather, the most missed aspect of Soviet times is the affordability of goods and especially the economic security and regularly paid salaries. While, according to some informants, it was not even that easy then if you had a family with many children, one was definitely less worried. "For 200 *sum* a month", as a common saying goes, "you could have a reasonable life; much better than today". Yet, how this was possible and how the whole system worked goes unmentioned and unquestioned. How the system came to an end is also not reflected by many.

> "In the past, everything was better. One didn't have to cultivate plots. Salary was simply enough. Everything was available. It wasn't a problem to get construction material for a house. Everything came from Russia. We lived in a time when people came by car to school - today, everybody walks. Everywhere everything was the same price. It wasn't possible to buy so many and so different goods. You know, during Soviet times we did not know and we did not really think about how to make a living. Now it is difficult to get used to it." (Sardor)

Thus, *nostalgia* arises from declining living standards, insecurity and an unpredictability people did not experience in the past. However, as became clear in the preceding chapters fragments of socialism continue to exist in Uzbekistan in different spheres such as in the political, economic and social – in some aspects to a high degree and in others to a lesser. In some aspects they are clearly definable, in others they are fuzzy. Skills and knowledge are a further issue considered by those socialized under the Soviet regime to have been superior in the past. Thus, for example, the older generation sees themselves as more capable in agricultural work than the younger ones. They appreciate the fact that the practical work in the kolkhoz, which they did as an obligation during school times, is now available to them as a resource of which they can make use today, as a source of knowledge in order to satisfy the family's needs. This loss of knowledge is also seen as the reason for agricultural failures, which are to be seen in the performance of some *fermer*.[1]

> "The young generation does not understand agriculture. We have a Russian education; we spent enough time on the fields and worked in the kolkhoz. But now, the younger generation do not know as much as we do." (Ismoil)

As has been described, after independence the Uzbek government dismantled most of the socialist welfare system. It did so not by privatization but far more through suspension. Yet, the Uzbek case is different than that of other "advanced industrial countries", which Rose describes as "privatization of public utilities and welfare functions a new emphasis on the personal responsibilities of individuals, their families and their communities for their own future well-being and upon their obligation to take active steps to secure this" (1996a: 327-328). In Uzbekistan, it has been independence, which has pushed the social from government space. The difference is that this push occurred without a privatization of these services. They simply disappeared; in some cases, like kindergartens, they shrunk to a minimum, in others, like the public transport system, they became unaffordable.

Actually, blaming the past regime or making the Uzbek culture responsible for the drawbacks of the present is not very widespread. To some degree, the feeling of being economically inferior and other deficits seem to have been compensated by independence. A comparison to neighbouring countries is a

[1] Cf. also Wall (2008) on knowledge negotiation and management in rural Uzbekistan, focussing on the Khorezm Region.

significant reference point when creating an ideal state type. In particular, the events in neighbouring states like Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan legitimize the authoritative style of the Uzbek state in the eyes of most of its citizens. The paternalistic state is, however, not associated with any particular ideology. A state should care for its citizens, provide the necessary infrastructure and support the poor and the weak. It should be strong in order to care for its citizens and maintain order without, however, interfering too much in the business of those citizens. Due to its civil war following independence, the Tajik state is seen as a particularly chaotic one. Judgments are usually made concerning the respective presidents; the way countries are governed is merely seen as a result of their personal capability. Any potentially appreciable political and economic developments in these neighbouring countries, such as privatization or more freedom of speech, are not mentioned in this comparison.

> "Look at Tajikistan, look at what happened, conflict and war. Look at Kyrgyzstan; look at Kazakstan, there is no law, everybody does whatever he wants to. And the corruption; in Kazakstan you cannot travel from one place to another without paying somebody off. Once the interior minister travelled undercover and witnessed this and confessed as to how bad it is; he paid a lot of money on the way." (Akram)

One explanation for the present difficulties revolves around the costs of securing independence and protecting the state from its neighbours. Without these expenditures, there would be time and money for other things.

> "A big part of the money nowadays is used to fix the borders. Otherwise, there would be more for development. It costs huge amounts of money, this border issue, the president has been saying this for a long time." (Ulugbek)

Although talking about politics was not only avoided by my side but also by my interlocutors, there were some conversations about the president and his work. According to some people, it is not necessary to question things, especially the orders of the president, since he knows what he's saying and doing. If the things do not work, it is not his fault but rather that of the people under his command who do not fulfil his orders properly. He is seen as a father who cares for his family.

> "If there is order, than everything works well. If the things were done the way Karimov says, everything would be fine. What the father says, the child should do (*atanin aytqaninin bolanin kilishi kerek*)." (Botir)

The president is defended while others who work under him are seen as being responsible for the existing problems. The president supposedly does not know what is going on and he is not informed about the happenings on the local level. A further explanation is that he knows what is going on but he is alone and the people around him do not let him change things. In the end, he is the good guy and the others who work with him are not. Different explanations are given for centre-periphery relations and malfunctioning politics. One argument is that in the centre, the administration is not acquainted with the local realities and makes decisions, which they attempt to implement using different mechanisms of force. The other argument sees the centre as well informed and aware of local realities, yet the local representatives' corruption undermines the centre's concept. The still existing plan economy and the manipulation of plans can also be seen as a reinterpretation of the centre at the local level.

The Uzbek government sees the privatization of agriculture as sawing off the branch you are sitting on or slaughtering a goose that lays golden eggs. For some people, privatization in general is synonymous with the withering of the state and it is perceived as negative and seen as causing an ineluctable decay of things since nobody cares or feels responsible anymore when things are privatized. In the past, the state as an entity was the cheated one but not seen as a cheater. Therefore, the privatization of public resources is also unwelcome and often illustrated by the case of Kazakstan where the president is said to have sold the country to foreigners. The paternalist state is one that carries the main responsibility in significant life spheres. It is not seen as necessary for the individual to carry any responsibility. Rather, privatization is seen as dangerous being that private is more widely associated with corruption and unfairness than is the state. This is similar to the case of the *xokim*, who are seen as corrupt while the state is not. The state is Karimov and he does not know what is going on.

Not only having enough financial resources for basic needs but also a certain quality of goods is highly appreciated when remembering the past. It is often mentioned that, "after the demise of the Soviet Union quality and quantity declined". The terms "good" and "enough" often refer to the abundance and substitutability of things, which was possible in the socialist economy with its social security. The time under Brezhnev is remembered as the best. One village resident described how he manages his life in relation to given

circumstances. He argued that if there were more resources available, then the president would distribute more but at the moment there is simply not enough. That is why they should learn to make a living from what is allocated to them. This recipe involves far more effort and workload than in the past but he has an understanding for the situation.

"Look, for instance, if you are a teacher and a *dehqon*, you can live well. ten *sot* of land - you can use it for potatoes and after that for corn. It is fine. At the moment, out of a total of 1000 *sum*, Karimov spends 600 on building up the country and 400 *sum* on the people. But within time, 600 *sum* may end in the people's pocket while the rest will be used for the construction of the country. Slowly we are moving forward." (Ilyos)

The concept of modernity is thus strongly associated with the socialist period. With the demise of the Soviet Union, being part of the world was also taken away (without, however, questioning the merit of independence). The thinking is simple: the Soviet Union was a world power and Uzbeks were a part of it. The system gave its citizens that feeling. Now, it is broken. During my field stay, besides western standards of living and fashions, Soviet (interchangeably with Russian) products were perceived as the benchmark of good and modern (see chapter four). These products of the past are still perceived as modern in the present and their durability is favourably compared to the unaffordable western modernity of the present. This creates a "Soviet modernity" and allows it to stay alive. However, the present imperfections are excused using the term "transition period" and are not seen as a fault of the people or the state.

At the same time, for Uzbeks and Tajiks being modern and civilized has a strong correlation with a sedentary way of life. Dirt roads and poor dwellings of custom officials are seen as a symbol of a lack of development and according to this criterion, Kyrgyzstan is poor and undeveloped. Although people long for reforms concerning a market economy, berating Kyrgyzstan in that respect is common. Conflict is further seen as a sign of backwardness. This primarily applies to Afghanistan and Tajikistan. If it weren't for the Russians and being part of the Soviet Union, it is believed that Uzbekistan could have ended up like Afghanistan. It is also a generally acknowledged view that the Russians, while avoiding mentioning them as colonizers, brought modernization to Central Asia even during the imperial period. The starting point of that is always seen as the infrastructure developed during the Russian invasion. Roads, elec-

tricity, schools and hospitals are some of them. Russia brought the world to Uzbekistan through the mass media of Russian news channels.

Interestingly enough, what is not mentioned are the effects these things had on the status of women. Quite the opposite, Uzbek women dressing like Russian women is not at all appreciated. Picture broadcasts from the streets of Tashkent with women dressed in tight trousers or miniskirts is frowned upon and seen as bad Russian influence. When I was planning to have a dress sewn in the village, we were discussing the model of the dress. I was asked if I wanted to have a Russian or Muslim cut. I asked what the Muslim model was. "The Muslim model is the Uzbek model, it is a different cut than the Russian. It looks like ours. It has a wide cut along the chest so that it does not cover your body tightly and does not accentuate it. We wear trousers under it, so you can sit and move comfortably." No doubt, for many reasons, I decided on the Muslim model.

7.3 Religious Revival and State Control

Since religion does not feature among the main foci of my research, I will not provide a comprehensive picture of its role in the community, for the individual and for the state. According to a number of historians who worked on Central Asia in recent years published valuable works on Islam and its suppression during socialist times (Northrop, Kamp 2006, Khalid 1998, 2007, Keller 2001). Islam was affected by the Soviet regime in the same way other religions were, perhaps even somewhat less because the regime did not want to offend a large and sensitive part of the population. The closing of mosques and the exiling or murdering of priests occurred at various stages of Soviet history. During the period of the Second World War, the destruction was stopped and even the reopening of mosques was allowed in order to keep the Muslim population at spirit.

It is very difficult to judge how much the anti-Islamic, or effectively atheist propaganda affected the minds of ordinary people. Not only was first-hand research not possible for western scholars, but also the data used by Sovietologists was based on secondary and often questionable sources. The works of prominent scholars like Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay (1967) are ex-

amples of this.[2] Much of this literature made us believe that it did not have any affect at all and that one day Islam would experience a revival and help to overthrow the evil empire (Beningsen & Wimbush 1985). This proved not to be the case but the degree as to which people accepted Marxism as a replacement ideology remains largely unclear. Another picture found in some of the literature on Islam in Soviet times is that of a reduction to folklore and a withdrawal to the domestic sphere. According to this view, the government had been quite successful in destroying what may be called "official religiosity". Thus, deprived of their educated priesthood, what remained was a folk understanding and practices that were strongly embedded in traditional social life (such as circumcision and sacrificing).[3]

Without touching the dichotomy of public (or official) and parallel (or underground) Islam, discussions concerning lived religion were not that easy during the Soviet era as they are at the present. How meaningful this dichotomy and the separation of religious spheres according to these concepts are, is not the focus of this study.[4] People like Azoda remember the past using the following words. "At that time, before independence, religious meetings could not be held as easily as they are today. It was forbidden, yet done secretly. They would come and ask if we had anything to do with religion." Nevertheless, what this shows is that the possibility of practicing religion did in fact exist, even if not as free as one may have wished. However, this was not only a Soviet problem. As the residents of my field sites admit, knowledge of Islam suffered in this period and the religion was lived merely by practiced rituals. Rather, a dilemma was seen between official ideology and private attitudes towards religion (cf. also Shahrani 1995:279).

> "During the Soviet period, we only prayed secretly at home. In the entire *viloyat*, there was only one mosque. Outside we were influenced by atheist propaganda while at home against *kafirlik* (infidelity)." (Qaydar)

The break-up of the Soviet Union and the independence of Uzbekistan enabled a reconfiguration of religious affairs. The early days saw a significantly more positive attitude towards religion in general and Islam in particular, as was to be expected. For many, this period meant being able to practice religion freely, yet it did not last long. Restrictions on religion were soon

[2] For a thorough critique of „Sovietological Islamology" see DeWeese (2002).
[3] For a Soviet view on this see Poliakov (1992)
[4] See also Saroyan 1997

to be introduced and legitimized by the state using discourses about "peace and order". But also, for many informants, the present situation necessitates regulations and zero tolerance for fundamentalists. The civil war in Tajikistan and the situation in Afghanistan are usually given as examples in this matter.[5] For the Uzbek government, the construction of a few mosques, allowing fasting during Ramadan and the Friday prayer were seen as sufficient religious freedom and that attitude soon replaced the relaxed atmosphere of the early days of independence. The government tries to control any kind of opposition by all means possible and by using local or international events as a pretext for the legitimization of authoritarian rule. Religious movements suffer under this political atmosphere, as do other political movements.

After independence, the appearance of Islam in public is thus still rather limited. Too much religious education, visiting mosques or fasting are quickly seen as characteristics of fundamentalism, which threaten the peace and order of the country. In contrast, life-cycle rituals like circumcision, which was practiced under the Soviet regime, did not receive special attention from the government since they are seen as a part of the Uzbek identity, as part of being Muslim. Thus, citizens' devotion to religious affairs is strongly controlled and determined by the state. Whoever stays within the given frame will not be categorized as a "Wahabi" or "fundamentalist" and thus not as anti-government.[6] On the other hand, one's type of clothing or beard, or the organizing of religious meetings can turn anyone into a suspicious citizen, a citizen who does not appreciate independence and the peaceful, harmonious life in Uzbekistan. Especially young men are placed under observation by state institutions starting from the *mahalla* level.

This is, again, not everywhere the same. One's own locality and superiority towards other places and rivalry between provinces are not only stressed by using delicious food and being more "civilized" but also by the degree of religiosity. The outstanding position of Bukhara as a traditional centre of Is-

[5] See Louw (2007: 22-32) for different movements and events, which support the state discourse and legitimise restrictions on religion in Uzbekistan. One of the significant events is the Tashkent bombings in 1991. Conspiracy of political opposition by Islamic groups and their attempt on Karimov's life was the main explanation used to justify authoritarian politics.

[6] The term „Wahhabi" is used by people as a label without actually knowing the meaning of the word. It is associated with danger and extremism. Atkin (2000) also argues that this term is used to refer to people who threaten the existing system. In my field sites, this term is also used as a generalization for Muslims who intend to change the existing system. People are classified under the term without really differentiating who these people are.

lamic education is well known (Frye 1997, Levi & Sela 2010, Keller 2001). This provides the city with a certain symbolic power in contemporary Uzbekistan despite its rather marginal role in politics. Its religious importance in the past reached far beyond the boundaries of Central Asia. Students came from all over the Muslim world to attend one of its hundreds of madrases and many spent decades or sometimes their whole lives in the city. It 'acquired a reputation as a bastion of conservative orthodoxy in which the ulama ruled the roost" (Khalid 2007:39).

Today, neither the city of Bukhara nor the rural areas have the reputation of being particularly religious in comparison to the Ferghana Valley, which is commonly considered the most religious region of Uzbekistan. Some people see the reason for this in the past resistance to Russian and Soviet occupation; others would claim that Islam has always been stronger in the Ferghana Valley. Others argue for a correlation between the more urbanized character of the Valley and the importance given to education. This goes in line with high population density, superior infrastructure and a higher level of economic development. In Bukhara and other parts of the country, people consider it a fact that the Valley is more religious and that more people from there go to the *hajj*. With its madrases, Bukhara is still famous and strongly associated with Islam. But in terms of practice, people in the Valley are believed to show more interest in the study of Islam. For people from the Ferghana Valley, religiosity is seen both as a sign and a result of intellectuality.

> "The old Qoqand khanate had a tradition of skilful and talented people; a development going way back. Other places have only started now. Bukhara and Samarqand, compared to the Valley, do not give the same importance to religion. People went to madrases from other places, but not the Bukharian people. The locals didn't consider it important. In Bukhara, they study but they do not have ambitions. There are many erudite people from the valley on the president's staff. In other places, they only know how to take care of their livestock and similar things. As you can see, people here were always educated; the intellectual people come from the Valley". (Farxod)

Whether or not people became more religious after independence is another discussion, but the symbols of religion certainly became more visible in everyday life. It is difficult to arrive at a conclusion concerning any potential increase in religiosity since there is no way to compare religiosity in the pre- and post-independence period due to a lack of data. If one measures religios-

ity by headscarves, beards, mosques or food and drinking habits, then religion started to show itself and take its own place in society. In the post-Soviet context of Uzbekistan, the claim that religion came out of the domestic private sphere and into the public is thus partially true. But on the other hand, since control of religion is so strict, and being stigmatized as a fundamentalist happens quickly and is rather dangerous, living Islam publicly definitely has its restrictions. The idea of "living Islam" according to one's own imagination did not really come true after independence. Religion became and is an affair of the state, which determines the limits of it. The anticipated de-privatizing of religion did happen, however within certain restrictions. The fact that one is quickly labelled a fundamentalist leads young men to practice religion privately at home instead of going to a mosque. Older men feel more comfortable to practice in public since in their case it is seen as a sign of wisdom and as adequate behaviour of their age.

Thus, religious freedom under the Uzbek government is shaped by many regulations, restrictions and control mechanisms. In the first years after independence, mosques were opened all over the country. It became a common feature of every rural community to have a mosque, often being housed in a former kolkhoz building. Soon, however, the building of mosques became strictly controlled and was put under surveillance by the state, again unlike neighbouring Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan (McBrien 2008). I was told that many, if not most of the newly established mosques were again closed only a few years after their foundation and new mosque buildings were not allowed. According to my informants, since 1999, 3'300 out of the 5'000 mosques in Bukhara have been closed. There is no possibility to check the accuracy of these numbers, but what does seem to be confirmed rather often is that initiatives to build mosques are hampered. The closings were justified using the explanation that they had initially been constructed without using the proper procedures. So, in fact, all mosques had to close and register again. In this process, the majority was not allowed to re-open. Mosques stayed closed due to reasons such as missing documents, poor construction conditions or sometimes without any real reason at all. The decrease in the number of mosques also brought another change in religious activities. Most people visit the mosque only on Fridays or religious holidays and otherwise practice at home. Too frequent visits may make one suspicious in the eyes of the local administration. Only on special occasions like *qurban aid*, most of the male population attend mosques and

pray in public.

In Romitan there are a few functioning mosques in the villages. In Marxamat, between 1991 and 1998, five mosques had opened, yet since 1999 only one has continued to be in operation in the entire *tuman*. Here, as in other cases, several *hajji* got together and made an application to the *viloyat* for the reopening of a mosque. All documents were ready and were only awaiting a signature. It is a troublesome and exhausting procedure to open a mosque. Construction expenses are not the main problem in this respect. They are covered by donations; even by people who do not attend the mosque. The main problem is rather finding somebody who takes responsibility of the mosque. This person also has to guarantee that the mosque will be no place for fundamentalist and anti-government voices. Taking this responsibility is not everybody's concern.

7.4 The Role and Status of Religious Authorities

With the revival of religious practices and public discourses, it also needed authorities to take responsibility. Mullah and *domla* are used as categories for referring to people who are knowledgeable in reading and teaching the Quran and teaching children the Arabic script. It is also accepted that they expect to be paid for these and other performances during life-cycle rituals. As a result of the Soviet period, these people tend to be few. Often, a pilgrimage to Mecca can bring one to a status of being recognized as a religious authority. Of course, simply being a *hajji* does not mean that this person is trained or has any competence in religious knowledge. If this person profits from his personal charisma and from a certain position in the past, and combines these with his new role, then he may be quite successful and be acknowledged as an authority, at least in comparison to others. If available, usually a *hajji* or another respected person is in charge of religious rituals. Besides the spiritual aspects, this combination of old and new status as a *hajji* can create social and economic capital for some people.

Becoming a *hajji* is not that easy. In principle, everybody can go to the *hajj,* at least whoever can afford to pay for it and is able to collect the necessary documents. In order to manage the trip, the person needs around $1'300 for the preparation and an additional $1'500 to take with him. Furthermore,

the bureaucratic procedures and bribes to pay are too much for many people to afford. As with other religious issues, going to the *hajj* is strictly regulated. Firstly, every state has a certain quota for the *hajj* set by the religious authorities in Saudi-Arabia and, if only for this reason, some regulations are necessary. But the procedure common in Uzbekistan once again shows the role of the state as one of surveillance instead of that as an organizer or supporter of its citizens' needs.

The first step is to make an application to the *selsoviet*. The candidate should be known as a good citizen; he himself as well as his relatives should not show any fundamentalist tendencies and not be convicted of anything. The person receiving the necessary documents is then allowed to go one step further and make his application to the *tuman* centre. A medical examination is undertaken and after this some basic information about the trip and its religious meaning is provided in the *viloyat*. If he or she has proven to be a suitable candidate the person is allowed to go to the *hajj*. This is the procedure for an ordinary citizen, for members of the elite the entire procedure may be easier and more comfortable either via bribes, personal relations or by travelling via the quota of another country like Kyrgyzstan.[7]

Besides the spiritual aspect of the *hajj,* there is also social and economic aspect to it. A trip to Mecca can, at least afterwards, be turned into other types of capital. Reputation is one of those. Being a *hajji* carries with it a meaning, which is highly useful in daily life. When I asked about the status of being a *hajji* and if it has any relevance in daily life, the following citation summarizes the general opinion as well as my own observations.

> "For instance, if a *hajji* goes to the *xokimiyat*, he gets more respect simply because he is a *hajji*. His wishes are not declined as easy as yours or mines. When he goes to the bazaar and asks for the price of something he gets a different price. Or he bargains and offers a price that is accepted simply because he is a *hajji*. To every *toi* he is invited, he can eat himself full (*karni toyar*), he gets gifts and money." (Abdullah)

Besides being fed, there are many more benefits for a successful *hajji*. Since independence, many rituals and ceremonies, like circumcision or mourning, are conducted more freely and are performed publicly. One does not need to be religious or have knowledge on Islam for this. They are and must be carried

[7] In the Valley, the number of applications is higher than in other parts of Uzbekistan but the basic procedure is the same. The only difference is the role of the *mahalla* as a first step before applications can be made to the *selsoviet*.

out by everyone. A circumcision ceremony, a wedding, a funeral, moving to a new house or when a wish comes true: there is always an accompanying ritual with a religious character.

I would argue, however, that being a *hajji* does not bring the same advantages for everybody in the post-Soviet context. The case of Hajji Bobo may illustrate this. His past status as a school teacher allowed and prepared him for his new position after his retirement. He went to Mecca in 1996 and was the first person from the village. For a while, he was the only one in the kolkhoz.[8] His social capital from the past allowed him to gain access to other resources. I do not want to claim that he went to Mecca in order to gain power and economic benefits, but even today others who have been to Mecca are not regarded with the same authority as he is. As one man told me, he is still a "fresh *hajji*" and he does not get as many requests as Hajji Bobo does. Perhaps his reputation is a combination of many factors like his past status, his charisma, and his knowledge and experience in dealing with people and particular situations. This capital cannot, of course, be gained by others retrospectively. Hajji Bobo profited from his past in different settings for different reasons. Besides earning additional money, he also enjoyed a kind of privileged status in the *tuman*, which is useful for a host of other issues.

The situation is similar in the other settings. A Kyrgyz *mahalla aqsaqali* in the Valley mentioned an increase in the number of people going to *hajj.* He added that only "educated *hajjis*" can make money out of it, while others do not or cannot use it for that purpose. According to Kadir, when people came back from the *hajj,* sometimes a kind of competition would commence about who could take advantage of the status. In one case, this turned into a conflict culminating in a mosque being burned down. Two *hajji* both wanted to be the mullah of that mosque, and then one of them burned it down.

During Ramadan, Hajji Bobo was not to be seen, this was the "peak season" with lots of invitations. Typically, the host of the ceremony picks him up or organizes a transport and then at the end he is driven back home again. During the first days of Ramadan, Hajji Bibi told me that for *iftar* we did not need to wait for Hajji Bobo and after a week it became clear that he was invited somewhere almost every night and came home late. Besides money and gifts (clothing, sweet and others), he also brought bread home with him so during

[8] In total, there were some ten from the kolkhoz and an estimated thirty from Romitan *tuman.* During my stay, nobody from the kolkhoz managed to go to the *hajj.*

Ramadan a lot less bread needed to be baked at home. This slowed down after Ramadan, yet didn't stop completely. On such occasions Hajji Bobo has quite a busy time schedule. Sometimes, I noticed how he would leave home and then return later with bundles of loaded plastic bags. What he brought back in his pockets is, of course, harder to guess. Hajji Bibi told me that sometimes he only receives gifts (and no cash), yet sometimes, depending on the host, he gets up to 5000 *sum* from one invitation.

One day, the oldest daughters of Hajji Bobo stopped by and told her mother that "...some people are gossiping. They are talking about father's tight schedule and that he sometimes gets three to four invitations a day. They are jealous." I wanted to know whether other *hajjis* or others knowledgeable on the Quran were not invited as often as Hajji Bobo: "Of course, they are also invited but everybody wants Hajji Bobo. That is why he has three or four appointments a day. He does not want to upset people and accepts their invitations. When other people don't get invited as often, people start to talk." Actually, neither Hajji Bibi nor her daughter, were really bothered by the gossip. The status of Hajji Bobo is unchallengeable. Sometimes, he was not only overbooked but also exhausted and would then send a young boy as his representative. This boy already accompanied him occasionally and was also being prepared by Hajji Bobo for the entrance-exams to Mir-i Arab, the most famous of the madrasa in Bukhara.[9] The jealous people, according to his daughter, were other *hajji* who could not make use of their status and turn it to an economic resource as Hajji Bobo had done. Moreover, having Hajji Bobo in the ceremonies is not only seen as something normal and as part of the performance but is also a status symbol, which he accepts despite his busy calendar.

Other religious personnel hardly have the same degree of authority. They are not perceived as a competitor of Hajji Bobo because they are not seen as a religious authority. This is particularly true for women whose is limited. Nevertheless, they may also have some economic and social gains. They are invited for the women's *iftar* or *osh bibiyo* [10] but not on other occasions. After *iftar* , the host paid them money and gave gifts like cloth or head scarves. In

[9] Hajji Bobo has 2 students whom he teaches the Quran. They come three times a week quite early in the morning. One of the students had already been in Mecca. These courses are also paid. Again, in this aspect his social and political skills are very important, and a former kolkhozcu would hardly be able to make it.

[10] See Louw (2007) and Krämer (2002)

one *osh bibiyo* , there were around thirty to forty women (some of them left before the ceremony ended) and each gave 100 to 200 sum to the woman in charge. Besides the spiritual aspect of these gatherings, it is not very different from the *gap* in which women socialize, exchange information and fulfil their duties depending on their status as neighbour or bride (see chapter five).

There are a few religious specialists outside of these formal and informal denominations. One of them is Kadir. Especially younger people mentioned his name very often to me when the discussion turned to religion. "Did you meet Kadir Aka? He is very well educated and knows everything about Islam". Kadir is indeed an educated man who studied in Cairo and works as an elementary school teacher in Kyrgyzstan, just on the other side of the canal where he commuted every day. Kyrgyzstan does not have enough teachers, which is why Kadir can work there without problems. He knows that he is looked up to when it comes to religion and his brother who works in the National Intelligence Service protects him from harassment - otherwise he would already be behind bars, as he said. This allows him to speak rather blunt. He does not have the money to go to *hajj* and he does not see the necessity in the near future, as he is a strong critic of the regime.

7.5 Religious Practices and Understandings

For the majority, since independence making ends meet is seen as the toughest task of all and therefore "there is no time left for religious rituals". People who do not engage in religious duties legitimize their attitude using this expression. Providing the entire family with enough food and other necessities is also perceived as a kind of religious service. While the young people work at the bazaar or on the fields, the old pensioners stay at home taking care of the children and can easily engage in religious activities. Practicing religion is thus also seen as a division of labour. Furthermore, there is little sympathy for a young person devoting too much effort to religion and thereby not fulfilling his obligations for his family.

I will define many people according to their understanding of themselves as "Muslims in progress", someone who needs to gain knowledge in order to become a "real Muslim". A real Muslim is defined as someone who knows more about religion and also practices it properly. Lack of time is given as a main reason for why people cannot devote themselves to more intensive learning.

While the older generation is said to have time to practice and the younger ones nowadays grow up learning about religion properly, the generation in-between devote themselves primarily to economic activities in order to feed their families.

> "We started to get to know about our religion since independence. Now we have to work hard in order to feed our families. There is no time to pray and if you fast you cannot work on the fields under the heat of the sun. You cannot work hard. If you stay at home like my parents, it is fine. When we retire we will have more time to learn and to devote ourselves to religion. The young generation has now started to see, hear and learn about religion more than we did. We learned at school that there is no god, yet in our hearts we believed that there is one. But they wanted to make us atheists." (Zafar)

However, not following these practices is not seen as a sin or not being Muslim, since being an Uzbek automatically means being a Muslim. One can only be a *better* Muslim, yet there is no need to hurry since there is enough time in the future and until then one can still argue that "we are on the way to becoming one". Of course, there are people who are stricter with religious duties but the above-described attitude towards religion is common.

Everyone, however, practices life-cycle ceremonies like circumcision feasts or marriages, which are directly associated with Islam. Circumcision is the rite of passage for boys, "becoming a real Muslim by circumcision". In addition to that, there are certain days like the seventh and fortieth day of mourning, Ramadan and the feast of sacrifice *qurban aid*, as well as the ninth of May, or "Hatira Künü" (remembrance day)[11] when cemeteries are visited and people spread wheat and place flowers on graves. Besides *qurban aid*, there are also other occasions on which a sheep is slaughtered and the meat is cooked and distributed. For example, after the replacement of the kolkhoz chief, his successor organized a visit to Naqshbandi where he sacrificed a sheep and distributed its meat.[12] He had two reasons for this. The first was his thankfulness for getting his job, the second was his wish, as he said, that the fulfilment of the cotton plan would allow him to keep the job. But there are many other occasions on which people visit holy places and express their wishes or show

[11] This is the end of the Second World War and is still an official holiday. Monuments with lists of fallen soldiers are visited and flowers are laid down.

[12] A major Sufi order named after Muhammad Baha ad-din Naqshabandi from Bukhara, where his tomb is also located.

their gratefulness for wishes to come true, like having a son or getting rid of a sickness.

Praying regularly is another practice done mostly by the elderly or the young generation. Middle-aged people use similar excuses as those described before. The same is true for fasting during Ramadan. In Bukhara, many had only recently started to fast and many more were planning to do so in the future. The sons of Hajji Bobo fasted during Ramadan the first time. Alisher said he pursued two intentions through this. The first one, of course, is the fulfilment of his religious obligation and acquiring merit from God, but, as he frankly admitted, he was also keen on losing some weight.

> "Since independence, we are free. Nobody needs to hide if he or she is fasting. During the Soviet time, they forced people to eat lunch when we were working. If you did not have lunch or drink tea with the others, they would become suspicious and have a talk with you, asking you why you weren't eating. It gave us headaches. That is also why we did not fast." (Gulnoza)

In Marxamat, Oydinoy told me that in her school most kids from the fourth grade onwards, and even many younger ones fasted. She continued by explaining that when a few children started to fast, others would join them. This is also a kind of pressure on older people and some of them start fasting when they see children doing it. In the Valley, social control and pressure are given as the main motivations to fast.

> "If the neighbours fast, it is kind of unavoidable to do so as well. I was ashamed when I saw small school children fasting. However, I am really looking forward to the end of Ramadan. Now, the weather is not so hot and days are not so long. When we have fasting in hot summers, then less people fast, otherwise we would all collapse when picking cotton." (Munisa)

During Ramadan, some women, in rotation, organized *iftar* , the breaking of the fast, several times a week and invited each other. They were either from the neighbourhood or relatives and friends. Men also had their own separate *iftar* meetings. As I mentioned before, if gatherings, meetings or invitations do not take place among close relatives, women and men always sit in separate rooms. I always arrived with my host shortly before *iftar* . After breaking their fast, some women read texts either in Uzbek or in Tajik. After these readings, there was no discussion about the texts. Some women

listened carefully; some exchanged the latest news with a neighbour sitting next to her. Nobody there was acknowledged as a religious authority. During these visits, I met one woman regularly who dominated the meetings with her readings. She was in her mid-thirties and had a powerful voice. She was nicknamed "Tajik", as she spoke Tajik better than Uzbek. And she read in Tajik. Sometimes, some women would complain that she should read in Uzbek because they couldn't understand everything. Others preferred Tajik because it sounds more impressive and sends them into a state of trance.

In contrast to rituals, food taboos are not directly associated with Islam and the people were not particularly concerned with them. Dealing with food taboos was mostly quite relaxed and again attributed to a certain age and status of people. They are to be obeyed when people start praying or go to *hajj.* During the very first days of my stay with Hajji Bobo's family, his wife offered me a piece of *kalbasa* , a Russian type sausage, which was bought especially for me. It is highly liked by the whole family. Without providing any reason or explanation, I kindly refused. I wanted to avoid eating pork. *Kalbasa* can be made out any kind of meat and they very likely contain some pork. Hajji Bibi was trying to be a good host and convince me to eat; perhaps she thought I was shy. "The *kalbasa* is from the city, it is good quality and expensive". In the end, my lame and unconvincing excuses of "not being hungry" did not help and I had to admit the true reason was that I wanted to avoid eating pork.

All the other members of the household, her grandchildren, son and daughter-in-law, enjoyed this rarely available sausage. Hajji Bibi herself also refused to eat it saying that in her age and with her status she cannot allow herself to eat *kalbasa* anymore. When she was young she ate a lot, yet now she prays and as the wife of a *hajji* she cannot eat it any more.[13] "But", she said, "you are still young and do not pray, so you can eat it". This type of behaviour or attitude towards religion was common. She did not try to explain her behaviour in a religious way, such as with food taboos forbidding her to eat pork. Social reputation and status were more important in this respect.

I was never offered *kalbasa* in Hajji Bobo's house again, but in other places it was not a rare event. Once, Hajji Bibi and I visited somebody together. As

[13] Hajji Bibi gained this status through her husband. She has not been to Mecca, unlike her husband, and she cannot read the Quran in Arabic script. She told me that because of her husband, she got the name Hajji Bibi. In contrast, the wives of other *hajjis*', even those who had been in Mecca themselves, are not called "Hajji Bibi". She was the only one in the village.

usual, the host did not want to let us go without offering us something to eat and prepared a quick meal with fried *kalbasa* . Before I could open my mouth and recite a polite story of not being hungry, Hajji Bibi proudly told them "she does not eat *kalbasa* because of the pork" and continued to say, "she is like us, she is Muslim, like us Uzbeks". The host did not know what to say for a while until she added, "we are all Muslims, but we forgot during the Soviet time, now we start to learn our religion again."

For many people, neither eating nor keeping pigs was seen as a problem. In some villages, people keep pigs and find it to be a lucrative business. Arif has four pigs and sells the meat at the bazaar in Bukhara.[14] Although in the last years he and others have had some complaints from neighbours, leading to some giving up this business, there are still people like him who keep pigs. The complaints are not so much explained religiously but, as mentioned earlier, for climate reasons. And the disgust shown towards pork is remarkably less than in my own experiences in Turkey. It is seen as practical and useful for the body and as nutritious for children.

> "Under the heat of the Bukhara sun, you cannot keep pigs; they smell. It is suitable for places like Germany where the weather is cool. Otherwise, it is good. Those who pray avoid pork but it is good for the body. It is also financially good. They reproduce very quickly and the shashlik is very delicious because the meat is fatty. A slice of bread with pork fat, especially in the winter, helps to keep the body warm. It is particularly good for children; they can eat it before they go to school". (Zafar)

The attitude towards alcohol is similar and its consumption is very common. If somebody refuses to drink, the reason is usually "I can't take alcohol cause I am allergic". Women usually do not want their husbands to drink so much, again, not for religious reasons but rather due to financial reasons and its effect on the physical and mental well-being. Women drink amongst themselves at their meetings; occasionally a bottle of vodka and some white wine. In public, it is frowned upon. Alcohol consumption by young people is also not approved of; not so much because of religion but because it is considered a bad habit and may lead to hooliganism. For the elderly, it is similar to the attitudes towards the consumption of pork. When they start praying, they should stop. Of course, this particularly applies to *hajji* (although some of

[14] In the rural markets, the number of customers buying pork is limited but in the city there are enough customers like Russians or other groups.

them still occasionally drink vodka). Hajji Bobo used to drink lots of alcohol when he was school director.

> "When I was young, before my retirement, I used to drink. We had visitors from the *tuman* or I had been at the *tuman* for meetings, so I had to drink. But since I was in Mecca I do not drink anymore. I do not, however, forbid my sons to drink. When we were young we all did." (Hajji Bobo)

It also did not disturb Hajji Bobo when alcohol was consumed in his presence. Only his wife complained when the sons drank. 'What will the other people think about us? It is not appropriate for sons of a *hajji* to drink". But at the same time, she would tell guests or me to finish my glass and not to leave any vodka left over. On the other hand, when my husband was with me and we were visiting people, I was asked how my life at Hajji Bobo's house is, and if he (my husband) gets enough to drink.

The amount of vodka consumed at wedding feasts, circumcisions, birthdays or classmate meetings is indeed remarkable. If somebody does not offer enough alcoholic beverages he is seen as a bad host. "Either you do not offer alcohol at all, or if you do than there must be enough for all". Therefore, the cost of alcoholic beverages is an important part of the feast expenditures. Relatives often cover the costs of alcohol and thus make their contribution to the wedding. People talk about feasts primarily mentioning the number of guests present, the amount of meat eaten and the number of crates of vodka that were consumed. These are the criteria for a good feast. Like meat, alcohol consumption is also a criterion of a certain living standard and is not perceived as being inconsistent with religion. In a similar sense, after meals or when passing a cemetery a short prayer *(omin)* is read and ones face is wiped with ones hands. It does not matter what kind of food has been consumed or if someone has drunken vodka; it does not prevent one from doing this practice.

Proper dressing was even less of an issue. The headscarf was not really a subject people talked about in everyday-life. Debating the way of tiding it or what kind of scarf one uses is something new and unusual for most people. Most Uzbek women, married or unmarried, young or old wear a loosely tied scarf allowing some of their hair to be visible. This form is now distinguished from a bigger headscarf, necessary for the „new form" of covering all of one's hair. I was told that women from Turkey cover their hair like that and that Uzbek women learn from them. Women with this new way of covering were

to be seen in the city or maybe in the *tuman* but not in the village. Wearing headscarves or the covering of one's hair in general, however, is only loosely related to religion. Hajji Bobo's wife, their daughter and daughter-in-law all covered their hair in the traditional way. I also got some headscarves as gift and was asked occasionally if I do not want to use them and cover my hair like them. When I did, it was commented that "...it looks good when you have one, it fits you."

However, there was a case in the village of a woman whose clothing was a topic of discussion. She was from a well-known family that was not terribly religious, yet the whole family suffered from her decision to wear a burka. This was seen as backwardness and directly associated with Afghanistan, with radical Islam and the Taliban. She was divorced and lived in her brother's house, a well-respected *fermer* (and very fond of drinking). Both were invited several times to the village administration with the goal of convincing her to stop wearing the burka. Furthermore, Hajji Bobo, as a distant relative, was occasionally asked to talk to her, without success.

If somebody has relatives with "fundamental religious tendencies", these people are excluded and avoided from the very beginning. According to state officials, they are a threat to the stability and the peaceful coexistence of Uzbekistan. People from the neighbourhood are also frightened to contact them, no matter if they actually believe in their ideas or not. One reason for the, while very limited, success of Islamist movements is the low level of education among the mullah, as Kadir described. They could not satisfy the needs and demands of the people. As is typical when it comes to a low level of religious knowledge, it is easy to pull people in any direction, be that traditionalist, fundamentalist or reformist, as he categorized them. The second category, often labelled as Wahabi, are in fact few. There are some people who support them, often due to personal experiences of being put in jail where they had to wait years for a trial and were then sentenced with little evidence. As Kadir argues, repression will not solve the problem if the injustices in Uzbekistan continue to exist. In his view, injustice, corruption and economic difficulties are the reasons why people seek answers in extremist or fundamentalist movements, in line with what anthropologists like Schoeberlein (2001) and Zanca (2003) would also claim.

There was also little discussion in the Ferghana Valley about what kind of Muslim one is. Only once was I asked about my school of thought within Islam.

Following my answer, I was recognized as "one of us". At the beginning of the conversation, this circle of "one of us" was large, including Kyrgyz or Kazaks. Soon Uzbeks and in particular Tajiks were then considered to be more religious than any other groups. Beards and headscarves are seen as symbols of this, although they may take a negative connotation. "Tajiks in Tajikistan look like Afghans. For them, religion, fasting and praying are not only important for men but also for women". Otherwise, being Muslim is not seen in strong opposition to being Christian or any other religion. Non-Muslim habits, like eating pork or drinking alcohol, are called "Russianness". The term Christian is never used in that context, even if the Uzbek self-perception is based on the claim that "we are Muslims, we are not allowed to do so". Still, people who drink remain Muslims, just not good Muslims. Nobody was ever seen to have become Christian due to his non-Muslim habits; one merely may become "orus" (Russian). There was no discussion on the faiths of others. An Uzbek-Russian comparison was mostly based on tradition rather than on religious differences. In that respect, Uzbeks defined themselves as being devoted to family and kinship needs. Russians are seen as more self-oriented, but also as people who know how to enjoy life more than Uzbeks.

7.6 Views on Modernity and Future Perspectives

I would thus argue that the vast majority of people in contemporary Uzbekistan do not choose religion as some kind of escape from economic difficulties, frustration or as an ideological vacuum after the demise of the Soviet Union. If that were the case, there would be masses of people choosing this path as a strong alternative to their present life. The concept of Muslimness (*musulmanchilik*) is, however, often used as a quick and convincing answer in order to explain things like dress codes or architecture. The latter applies, for example, to courtyards, which block the inside of the houses from outsiders' views: "You should have privacy, when women go to the toilette, it should not be seen by neighbours on the outside. It is also more safe to construct houses like that." Another view was that "... we do not have canalization where the wastewater from the bathroom mixes with that of the kitchen, if they flow together it does not fit *musulmanchilik*, that is why we have the toilets at the end of the

courtyard". But in the same household, many sacks of flour were kept in a corner of the toilette, which seemed to me to contradict the aforementioned description of *musulmanchilik*.

Furthermore, there is no recognizable rejection of Western models. After being connected for 20 years now, the West remains, however, a kind of "Imaginary West"; a local cultural construct that is based on forms of knowledge and aesthetics but not necessarily referring to any "real" West. This also contributes to "deterritorializing the world of everyday socialism from within." (Yurchak 2006: 35). Occasionally, people would say that what they get now is not the "real" but just a "fake" western brand.

When people say, "now we start to live in a market economy", or "this is the market economy, you should take care for yourself now", this does not mean that neoliberal principles actually replaced the state in Uzbekistan since control and planning continue to exist in the most important spheres. Rather, the Uzbek state simply withdrew itself from those parts of the social sphere it is not able to service anymore. However, when the conversation turns to land, people say it should be private. At least, land distribution is highly desired, even without full ownership rights, similar to private plots with limited usufruct rights. Future expectations of people in relation to privatization have already been realized in some neighbouring countries. Different than in the Valley, where Kyrgyzstan is seen as a good example of privatization, in my Bukhara field site privatization is still perceived as being far away. When I confirmed that in Turkey or Germany the state gave the land to individuals, people turned to others in the room and, accompanied by a gesture of surprise, stated that "...in Turkey land is also privatized". I was then told that, "We are also slowly on this way".

Another criterion related to modernity is the number of children one has. With development, the number of children decreases and, according to some informants, that is the case in present Uzbekistan. I cannot confirm if this is the case because Uzbekistan became more modern or, like other informants said, because due to economic difficulties people cannot look after many children properly. At the same time, it was amazing to see so many people who had lost so much life quality but kept telling me that with independence development came to Uzbekistan. In the end, the sinking birth rate was usually seen as a result of economic events and illnesses (the latter in turn due to ecological reasons). The Soviet era is perceived as a time when women did not have to

weigh so many factors when it came to giving birth to many children.

> "We did not think that much about the future of the children, whether we can take care of them or what will happen to them. We just gave birth. Today, it is not that easy; you need to think about it. The young generation is more reasonable and only has as many children as they can care for." (Munisa)

Most families, especially those with a tradition of higher education, do whatever they can to make sure their children - particularly their sons – can study. Of course, the best option is that a son studies and gets a good job, with which he can also make money and has good connections. But the main wish is that he should study whatever he can and then one will see for which positions he can apply. Besides the economic aspect, prestige and family tradition (even if it is only two generations) are also very decisive. Children of certain families are strongly encouraged to study and get a university diploma. For elites' children there is no problem to find a job after their graduation.

An alternative to universities are the newly founded colleges. These can be described as a kind of vocational school. There is an entry exam but, according to my informants, by paying 50,000 *sum*, even unsuccessful candidates can get registered. The construction of colleges with colourfully painted facades was one of the symbols of state investments, especially in the Ferghana Valley. These schools are shown as an example of development and modern investment by the government. Critical voices complained that nothing happens except for the construction of these colleges, which fall apart after a short time. Not only the number of colleges but also their construction quality was under critique from many people. Some people expressed a greater need for factories in order to create jobs. For others, the graduates from these colleges will build up a qualified labour force for the future which makes it necessary for the president to invest in them.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

It is 20 years now that an independent Uzbekistan appeared as a result of demise of the Soviet Union. This dissertation is about the life in two rural settings of the country and how individuals and the families manage to live under new emerging circumstances. It was neither possible to cover every sphere of their lives nor was this the objective of this study. My aim was rather to describe life after socialism, living with its legacy and remnants, which are not only alive in the memories of people but also inherent in the peculiarities of the current 'Uzbek way" towards transformation. This necessitates a respond from individuals, which has to make the impossible possible and which I called the real "Uzbek puzzle"[1]. For some parts of the puzzle I found answers and explanations, for others I did not. The reasons behind this are different. Some may be related with me as an anthropologist while some are related with the field site, namely the state of Uzbekistan. However, I believe that this work gives an insight into the lives of people in this part of the world difficult to approach.

The life of people in both field sites has changed since independence in many respects. For some, it has brought radical changes, for some it has not. The majority of the rural residents have faced a tremendous decay of living standards after the collectives were either dissolved or became non-functioning. For a certain number of people, who were part of the former socialist rural elite, these introduced changes did not cause radical alterations, or at least less unfortunate ones. They were able to preserve a superior economic and political standing in society. Agricultural land is the main income resource in

[1] A term used by Zettlemeyer (1999) for the relative success of Uzbekistan's transformation policy that seems to contradict the expectation of economists.

the rural areas and the object to fundamental changes but also a realm where the past continuous to exist. All land and much of the agrarian production is still ultimately under the control of the state. In this institutional frame, actors try to find their place and improve their position or, in most cases, not to loose where they are and what they have. A handful people become *fermer* while many others work for them as kolkhozcu or simply use their small private plots as *dehqon*. The changing socio-economic context and the uncertainties in everyday life is something new for both *fermer* and *dehqon* but the meaning and the extent of concernment differs significantly. I tried to approach their life after the break down of the collectives as intimate as possible and to picture their relations with each other as well as with the state.

It is thus essential for everybody in rural Uzbekistan to obtain and retain access to land in one way or another. *Fermer*, who are mostly the people well situated with economic and political resources, obtain this access easily. Others get access to some land through by working for them or for the transformed collectives, the *shirkat*. The absence or insufficiency of salaries makes land issues more significant since the private plots are hardly enough to survive. This situation is grounded not only in the agricultural production process and the lack of employment facilities for the landless labour force but also in the power relations and a new type of dependency, which did not exist in this form and extent in the past. In rural communities where locality plays a very important role and people are linked with each other via kinship, neighbourhood and friendships ties, power relations and dependency gain another dimension and complexity, characterised by asymmetric relationships and a lack of trust in state institutions among those who lost most of their former benefits.

Since cotton still strongly determines the state agenda, the lives of rural residents is also shaped to a large degree by its cultivation cycle and its side products. However, the profit goes to a rather limited number of people, namely those *fermer* who are well linked to the local government and in particular to the state officials themselves who control the process from within the *shirkat* or the *xokimiyat*. All the others have to employ also non-agricultural activities as a part of their survival portfolio, depending on their capabilities and the local conditions. While the land as a basic resource plays an important role, life after independence necessitates more resources, skills and creativity in order to make ends meet. Daily expenses and even more life cycle expenditures are an enormous burden, in addition to money needed for

health problems or higher education. While some *fermer* feel responsible for their labour suppliers, who are often also kin or neighbours, it is far less than what kolkhozes provided for their workers in the past. The decisions taken under these circumstances have immediate effects on gender and generational relations. For example, higher education, which was more or less available for everybody and not costly during the Soviet period, became not affordable for many families so that daughters are pushed more into to domestic sphere and are not allowed to study as a university degree is more preferred for sons.

Corruption is an additional income source for many people, from high-level state officials to everyone who has something to contribute to the market. Access to land, getting a diploma or a standard health service not only cost significant amounts of money as bribes but in addition need the existence of networks with people in power. Today, many infrastructural facilities like education, health and transportation are affected by a significant decrease not as a result of neo liberal policies but rather as a result of Uzbekistan's politics and economic policy. The rules of free market economy and democracy are deliberately applied in some realms of life as long as it does not cost the state anything and it does not endanger its authoritative rule.

At the same time, a new understanding of the state, new power relations and new economic challenges determine the conditions in which individuals act and try to satisfy their needs as good as they can. One major strategy is bypassing the restrictions on the way. Within this scenario, the household is not only a production entity but also the main unit of solidarity and trust. In that respect, generational support and pooling of available resources like pensions and cultivation of plots increase also the mutual dependency among generations. This has further increased in recent years with the growing out-migration. Now, grandparents become also the main nurse for their grandchildren while the parents seek their fortune in other places beyond the state borders.

The early years of independence saw not an economic transition but also ethnic and religious aspects were concerned. Ethnic clashes and religious fundamentalism were frequently evoked scenarios, which were thought to be directly related to the demise of socialism. This has not happened to the degree expected. While a few tragic inter-ethnic conflicts occurred in the Ferghana Valley, these remained limited in scope and time. Neither religious difference nor inter-state disputes have so far provoked violent events. Ethnic relations

are overall quite peaceful compared with many other parts of the world. The long historical co-residence and existence of inter ethnic marriages between Uzbeks and Tajiks are some of the reasons behind that. Relations with other ethnic groups, depending on the region, is more differentiating, in particular along the (former) nomadic-sedentary divide. Even today, Kazaks or Kyrgyz are perceived as nomads, which determines their place as inferior in the social and political landscape. According to the degree of similarity or difference, the Uzbeks as the titular and numerously dominant group allow others to co-exist or eventually assimilate. The fundamentally flexible concept of Uzbek identity helps in this regard (Finke 2006).

One other aspect, mentioned in this study, is religion. My data show in this respect a similarly flexible rapprochement of actors as in the case of ethnicity. It is appreciated that after independence one can live one's religion, in this case Islam, more openly than in the past but this does not mean that everybody is strongly interested and involved in the spiritual aspects of life. It is also true that people are concerned about fundamentalist movements, which can endanger the "peace and order" of the country but this is first of all a highly politicized discourse in Uzbekistan and used for control and surveillance by the state. There is a watching eye on religion as was the case during Soviet times. It is, however, no longer perceived as an ideology against socialism that one should get rid of, but is seen as an inevitable component of independence that should be controlled in someway.

From the actor's perspective, it is time to learn more about Islam but it is also a question of time and generation. The middle-aged generation mostly involved in heavy economic activities and socialized under the socialist ideology argues that they do not have enough time to dedicate to religion and they are on the way of becoming "good" Muslims. In contrast, the older generation has the sufficient time as their children care for them. This generation is also not under that close suspicion from the state officials and less likely accused of fundamental intentions. Young men, who have no job perspectives and are not socialized under the Soviet regime, are the most suspicious group and can easily be stigmatized as religious fundamentalists. As one interlocutor put it, "in Uzbekistan, as much Islam is allowed as Islam allows".[2] I had the chance to observe how religious knowledge can also be a significant economic resource. People nowadays ask for this service and they pay for it. There are a number of

[2] The first name of President Karimov is Islam.

occasions and rituals where religious blessing is wished for, from circumcision feast to the fulfilment of the cotton plan. As in other spheres, like becoming a *fermer* or a local state official, religious authorities are usually people with a certain background and access to resources.

The current transformation in Uzbekistan and other parts of the former socialist world is first and foremost a process of fundamental institutional change (Finke 2004). This includes all levels of institutions from neighbourhood relations and religious attitudes to the change of property rights regimes and the design of the new nation state. As institutions prescribe specific rules on how to act towards others, they also shape, economically speaking, the incentive structure and thus the choice of strategies by individual or collective actors. As this study has also shown, trust is a major aspect in this respect. Trust in institutions and trust towards others is needed for any kind of cooperation. It unifies actors and enables solidarity among them. Solidarity is not only something encouraging but also a safety net if somebody fails. If we put these concepts in place, we may be able to understand why in present Uzbekistan (extended) families and households not only form the basic production and the consumption units but also are the main solidarity groups. When "rules of the game" can be violated at any time and this has no consequences for the violators, trust and cooperation suffers tremendously. This shapes the attitudes not only towards the state and its institutions but also towards other actors. If believe in justice and fairness is - for good reasons - not very strong, actors not only avoid risks but also do not fight to seek their rights. Moreover, in order to take risks information and knowledge are necessary components so that actors feel reasonably confident making specific decisions. Thus, the general lack of trust in the post-socialist context, again, advantages certain groups in rural Uzbekistan while others become even more excluded from economic and social resources.

The post-independence period is seen as a time to work and one where individual responsibility is asked for. Daily basic expenditures become seriously an issue to worry about. While this is the most trivial thing for many people around the world, it is not so for members of formerly socialist societies and one may wonder about the adaptability of Uzbeks to the post-independence conditions. Maybe it is worth to think more about the skills of individuals as an important survival strategy. Making use of any available kind of resources, turning social capital into an economic one, or the creativity of labour organi-

sation within the household all necessitate certain skills. According to Barth, "... we all live lives full of raw and unexpected events, and we can grasp them only if we can interpret them - cast them in terms of knowledge or, best, anticipate them by means of our knowledge so that we can focus on them and meet them to some degree prepared and with appropriate measures. Thus a person's stock of knowledge structures that person's understood world and purposive ways of coping in it" (2002:1). If we consider independence as an unexpected event, Uzbeks grasp it differently according to an individual's knowledge and how good they are equipped with the necessary means. One may find the answer on who deals and copes with post independent challenges in Barth's explanations, "[K]nowledge is distributed in a population ... and [K]nowledge provides people with materials for reflection and premises for action" (ibid). Uzbeks who were socialized under the Soviet regime may be better equipped with knowledge and skills as one can imagine - and some of them make more out of it than others - but this knowledge can be the explanation of the ability to survive in view of the unexpected and often unpleasant developments they have to face today and in the future.

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